Dr. DUCHAL's

SERMONS.

VOL. I.

300L 6-6

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SERMONS

UPON THE FOLLOWING

SUBJECTS,

VIZ.

I. Eternal Life the Reward of patient continuance in well-doing.
II. Moral Perfection the ultimate Intention of all the works and ways of God.
III. The nature of Enthuſiaſm.
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VI. Chriſtianity the Spirit of Wiſdom, and of a ſound Mind.
VII. The nature and faculties of the human Soul; and particularly the operations of the underſtanding.
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XVII. Of the Reverence a man owes to himſelf.
XVIII. Of Friendſhip.

By the late Rev. JAMES DUCHAL, D.D.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

FIRST EDITION.

DOCTOR Duchal, *a few weeks before his death, having formed a reſolution, at the earneſt ſollicitation of a perſon he had a high regard for, to print a volume of his Sermons; and having mentioned the particular diſcourſes which he thought of to compoſe it; his friends who were acquainted with that deſign, were of opinion it ſhould be carried into execution, with as little delay as the other buſineſs of thoſe who had the care of it would admit; and accordingly they now give this volume to the public, without waiting to ſelect any more from that very large and valuable fund they are in poſſeſſion of; and without waiting for an account of the life of the excellent Author, which they would have wiſhed to have prefixed to it, had a proper one been prepared.*

In juſtice to him, the public muſt be informed, that the following Sermons were written without

out any view to the preſs, and that they are only a ſpecimen of his ordinary weekly labours; neither had he reviſed any of them, which there is cauſe to lament, as they certainly would have been much improved had he lived to have publiſhed them himſelf.

The Editors, notwithſtanding, flatter themſelves, that as they are now offered, they will be thought a valuable preſent by attentive and judicious readers; and that ſuch will receive much pleaſure and improvement from them. If they find that this volume meets with encouragement, they propoſe to ſelect more volumes; of which the manuſcripts in their hands will afford many, perhaps as valuable, and which will probably prove more generally acceptable, as the ſubjects may be more practical.

The laſt five Sermons have been added, upon the information of the printer that ſo many would be requiſite to make a full volume; the former thirteen only had been intended by the author, as he expected they would have been ſufficient.

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SERMON

SERMON I.

Eternal life the Reward of patient Continuance in well doing.

ROM. II. 7.

To them who by patient continuance in well doing ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life.

THAT the word *eternal* is to be taken here in the ſtrict and proper ſenſe, as ſignifying duration without end, will plainly appear from many parallel places of ſcripture; but eſpecially from conſidering the ſtate of the faithful ſervants of God who are admitted as heirs of immortality. They are made perfect; they receive the bleſſedneſs of the Heavenly ſtate as the reward of patient continuance in well doing upon earth; the reward of an obedience, ſincere, though

imperfect: But we are taught, that in this
I. state of reward they shall be perfect; that is,
delivered finally from all moral infirmity;
and have their good affections in lively exercise, without the least mixture of what is impure. Now, in such a state as this, they must be the objects of God's love and high complacential delight. And can it be imagined at all possible, that God, a being of most perfect goodness, and eternally and unchangeably disposed to communicate being and happiness, will ever destroy the being of those whom he loveth, and in whom he constantly delighteth. Every one must at once see that this is impossible, unless we suppose a necessity laid upon him: And who can imagine such a necessity? Or whence can it possibly arise? The holy scriptures speak of great numbers of Angels in heaven, who have retained their purity, innocence, and goodness; who encompass the throne of God, and stand ready as his ministers to execute his commands throughout the universe; creatures endowed with great power, and who enjoy high felicity. Can any one imagine that the father of spirits will destroy the being of any of these? Destroy them though guilty of no fault, but in all possible respects like the Eternal Father, and beloved of him! Destroy such exalted creatures as are indeed the glory

of

of the creation, and who [illegible] the creator, according to our way of ſpeaking, the higheſt delight! And may we not reaſon in the ſame manner with reſpect to the ſpirits of the juſt, who ſhall be preſented before the preſence of divine glory without fault and blameleſs? Their life, no doubt, will be everlaſting; and tho' the words tranſlated eternal, are in ſome places of ſcripture manifeſtly applied to a very long continued duration, which is not infinite, but determinable; yet in the caſe before us, what we know of the divine goodneſs, and of the ſtate of the perfected ſervants of God, make it very reaſonable for us to think that theſe words are to be taken in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, as ſignifying duration without end. And I can ſee nothing to object againſt this, unleſs we ſhould imagine that the family of God ſhould ſo increaſe in numbers that there ſhould be no room for them! A wild ſuppoſition, that there ſhould be no room for them in the immenſity of ſpace!

SERM. I.

Taking it, then, for granted, that the ſervants of God ſhall live through all the ages of eternity; I ſhall in the preſent diſcourſe, offer what may illuſtrate the greatneſs of this object; and then, ſubjoin ſome reflections which ſeem to be natural and uſeful.

SERM. I. Eternity has been fitly called a dreadful, pleasing thought. Dreadful it must be, unspeakably so, to such as are apprehensive of unhappiness in it. And as pleasing surely to such as rejoice in well grounded hope. That infinity which is incomprehensible by the human mind, and is, I may say, overwhelming to it, yet is, in its greatness, pleasing; pleasing because quite unbounded. To think of existence enduring, not only beyond all the power of numbers which we can add together; all the millions of years or ages which figures can comprehend; but that when this vast sum of duration is expended, it is but just beginning, and as far from a period as ever. Let us count out millions of ages, as many as there are atoms which enter into the composition of the material universe, yet this vast sum is nothing to eternity. Nor can human invention find out any thing to resemble it. Never, never to come to an end, to be nearer it. Amazing thought! And is such duration to be the portion and inheritance of man? It is. *Because I live, you shall live also.* Live a life immortal like mine. This is infinitely pleasing. How valuable must the gift of happy existence be accounted, as it is never to be recalled! How much to be adored the goodness from which it floweth? But now, in com-

comparison to eternity, what an inconsiderable thing is the time which hath passed since the creation of this world! How much less considerable the life of any of the individuals of mankind? Of this more afterwards. SER. I. 1.

But let us leave the greatness of this subject, which is too vast for the human mind, to comprehend, or form any adequate idea of, to make some useful reflections upon it.

And first, if God hath intended eternal duration for his servants, we may assure ourselves he hath intended them high happiness in it. Nothing else could suit eternity. In our present state, notwithstanding the strong desire of life which our Maker hath wisely and graciously planted in the heart of man, and notwithstanding the natural reluctancies men feel of going into a scene they never saw, and the particulars of which they know not; yet how frequently doth a satiety of life creep upon men, and make them even in a cool and dispassionate state of their minds, in a manner tired of it; and this not only when persons are pressed with great and manifold calamities, not only when the infirmities of age have compassed them about, but in a state and circumstances of life very tolerable, and in which there is evidently great enjoyment. *Solomon* has told us, long ago, *that there is nothing new under the sun*; and it is

not at all unnatural, that the conſtant repetition of the ſame things ſhould come in time to ſit heavy upon the mind. In the lives of moſt men, the things which are conſtantly repeated lie indeed within a very ſmall and narrow compaſs. We ſee, it is true, human life, in ſome reſpects, a good deal varied in the ſtages of it; new taſtes in life and new deſires appear, together with objects of gratification provided for them; in infancy, in childhood, in youth and mature age, we ſee a great variety of deſire and taſte, of buſineſs, and occupation, and purſuits; and often from maturity to old age, there are ſuch remarkable revolutions in the ſtate and circumſtances of men, as maketh the world appear in a manner new to them. But as that novelty, which is ſo remarkable and pleaſing in infancy and childhood, and gives ſo great pleaſure, inſenſibly wears off; ſo doth the novelty of all the particular objects which appear through life. They may, as new, greatly pleaſe for a time, but then that pleaſure decays, and ſomething elſe is wanted. But whatever variety, in theſe inſtances, may be in life, yet it is in moſt reſpects very much the ſame thing. And, as hath been ſaid, it is not at all unnatural that this ſhould beget ſatiety. A ſatiety which I acknowledge our Maker hath ballanced very wiſely by ſome af-

affections he hath planted in us; such particularly as the liking we contract to places we have long frequented, company with which we have long been familiarly conversant. How uneasy are many persons found, who are under a necessity of changing their country, and parting with their old friends? Novelty, often, in such cases, ministers no joy; on the contrary, it is great pain and distress to enter into a new scene. Thus things are wisely ordered by the supreme ruler. But, after all, it is known, that satiety of life is not intirely kept off by such things. It doth often grow upon men; and persons who think attentively will be of opinion, that *Solomon's* way of thinking is just, who maketh it one cause why the world is vanity and vexation of spirit, that there is nothing new under the sun. In a word, it is natural that a scene always the same, should be tiresome: It must be so, where there are not objects of delight which effectually fix the mind; or where that which men are engaged in, as their business and labour, does not produce what they highly esteem and value; such as a decent and comfortable provision for the support of life, and for the comfort and convenience of it. And, if it is found that persons contract a satiety of life, even in this short duration of it, how great must that sa-

[illegible] be, if were continued through many [illegible], especially, if it were to be without [illegible]. But it hath been said, that if there are [illegible] of delight which effectually engage [illegible] the mind to them, this will prevent any painful satiety from taking possession of it. For no one ever can be tired of an object very dear to him, and in which, for that reason, his satisfaction may be said to be always fresh. And therefore we may conclude it is most suitable to a state of indeterminable duration, that there should be objects of delight upon which the heart shall unalterably fix, and which shall constantly yield most pure and exquisite joy. This will indeed forbid all satiety of being, and render fruition always fresh and flourishing. Such objects, in our present state, even to the worthiest and happiest men, are but few, I speak now of external objects. But it is much to my present purpose, and will prepare us to judge the more justly of the world above, to observe, that our purest joys in this life spring from a consciousness of a right moral state, and from that fruition of our Maker, however it may be comparatively imperfect, of which in our present state we are capable. These, above all things else, relieve the mind from a painful satiety. I do not mean that they make men fond of this life; for the

con-

ſtate, who hath excellent
ing in him, and worthy
exerciſe, hath within himſelf a
fund of pure delight; and his
thoughts muſt always give him joy. It is not
poſſible for a perſon in this caſe not to have a
pleaſing reliſh of exiſtence: And all expe-
rience may be appealed to, whether when
the powers and affections of the mind
are in a proper ſtate and exerciſe, the heart
doth not exult. The internal, the moral
beauty muſt always appear a lovely, a raviſhing
form. And no delight upon earth can be
equal to that which a perſon taſteth, who
is juſtly an object of eſteem and love to him-
ſelf. So *Solomon* obſerveth, Prov. xiv. 14,
that *the backſlider in heart ſhall be filled with
his own ways, and a good man ſatisfied from
himſelf.* And then the joyful contemplation
of the Supreme Being and his perfections,
who is the governor of the whole univerſe,
and the maintaining a daily intercourſe with
him in meditation, and in acts of devotion,
greatly elevate the mind, and caſt a pleaſing

light

light upon existence in every circumstance of it. This fruition of God, however in our present state imperfect, yet must make existence always appear an invaluable blessing; and what doth not admit of painful satiety. God is to good men an inexhaustible fountain of joy and happiness, and no object whatsoever can as thoroughly engage the heart. And from what good men taste and experience of this upon earth, they may judge what the perfect in heaven enjoy: Enjoy in a state in which all the powers rational and moral are in the highest perfection, and in which they shall have a most intimate and full fruition of God. This will assuredly fix the mind in constant, most rapturous delight. And, as in this kind of enjoyment there can be no excess, neither can there be any satiety. It is impossible to wish or desire other or greater things, than are actually possessed. Both reason and the holy scriptures suggest to us many particulars which may contribute to the happiness of good men, besides this eternal self-complacency, and the vision of God, of which more will be said afterwards; but undoubtedly these are the highest and noblest objects of bliss: And existence in such a state must be ever most desirable. Therefore, as high happiness doth suit an eternal duration of being, so we see God hath made the noblest

bleſt proviſion for us; and we may [illegible] ſuredly conclude it impoſſible, that, through an eternal age, there ſhould be any thing like ſatiety. The ſpring will [illegible] pleaſing when our millions of millions of years are paſt.

Secondly; if we are to enjoy our excellent powers to an eternal age, and that in the moſt perfect ſtate of them, how are they to be employed? To which the anſwer is, undoubtedly in a manner ſuitable to them, ſuitable to ſuch a being; in a manner which ſhall be profitable and pleaſing. As to particulars, imagination may ſuggeſt innumerable things; but here we are checked, by being taught, that *we know not what we ſhall be.* Yet plain ſenſe and reaſon lead us to ſome general things, which are matters of very pleaſing contemplation: We may be clear, I think, that we ſhall retain the ſame frame of mind that we have now; the ſame combination and arrangement of powers and affections, and the ſame conſciouſneſs. Were it not ſo, we could not be the ſame creatures at all. Theſe powers, we have reaſon to think, ſhall then be much more perfect; but ſtill they are the ſame powers, the ſame underſtanding, the ſame will, the ſame affections, ſuited all to the ſtate in which men ſhall then find themſelves, and nothing eſſential to the human

human mind a-wanting. Now let us, if you please, attend to the employment and progress of these powers through an eternal age; and how will it enlarge the prospect! To begin with the human understanding: we see this in infancy appeareth extremely unfurnished, have very few ideas, and doth not know what use to make of them; but is capable daily of increasing it's stock, and ripens into that judgment, by which it determines concerning the agreement or disagreement of ideas, between truth and falshood. We see we are, through the whole of life, capable of increasing our knowledge: Never have we learned so much, but that we may learn more. Nay, to this capacity of increase, imagination itself cannot assign any limit. Suppose life continued ever so long, if the powers remain, new and additional progress, and new acquisitions in knowledge, may be made. And we are taught by the experience of all, that the largest measure of knowledge proveth no burthen, no oppressive burthen, to the mind, nor weakens its powers; but that, on the contrary, the capacity enlargeth with the acquisition, and that men the more they have learned, the more apt they are to learn; the less their labour, and the easier their progress. If this be the fact, and I think every one will be satisfied that it is, indeed according

cording to the conſtitution of our minds, it cannot be otherwiſe; what progreſs may the human underſtanding make throughout an endleſs life? Let us attend to this. The powers then will be more habile and perfect than they are now; and the nobleſt field of contemplation and knowledge will lie open to the mind, a field which is indeed unbounded, namely, God himſelf in all his works throughout immenſity. And in ſuch a ſtate how rich ſhall men become in the acquiſition of knowledge? This is indeed the proper riches of the underſtanding; and the value of it and the delight which it yieldeth, are beſt known to them who are poſſeſſed of its higheſt degrees. It is true indeed, that knowledge without charity may produce bad effects; particularly, the Apoſtle *Paul* ſaith *it puffeth up*, and we have ſeen many inſtances in which a real, or apprehended, large ſtock of it, hath made men vain and ſupercilious, ſometimes, indeed, intolerably ſo. But this can never be the effect in a ſtate where charity is in the perfection of it; and where meekneſs and humility and all the moſt amiable graces adorn every individual. There, the very largeſt acquiſitions of knowledge can produce no bad effects, but muſt yield a very pure and ſatisfying joy. In our preſent ſtate, the value of it is ſeen from the labours which

undergo in purſuing after it; labours which perhaps they would not ſubmit to for any temporal acquiſition. But indeed the preſent does not ſeem to be the ſtate for acquiring high degrees of knowledge. Our capacities are in many reſpects weak; our neceſſary avocations are many; the buſineſs of life engages the attention and powers, the greateſt part of our time; and many are ſeen to have no taſte for it, nor any inclination to ſpend their time in that purſuit. We are not to imagine that there ſhall be any cauſe for ſuch complaints in the moſt perfect ſtate: But that what is ſo becoming an improvement of the human mind, what is ſo pleaſing and uſeful, ſhall be then attained with little difficulty, and the taſte of it ſhall be, without queſtion, like the general ſtate, perfect in its kind: The proſpect of this is very pleaſing. Yet it is to be obſerved that whatever value we put upon knowledge in our preſent ſtate, it is the moſt beautiful, and the moſt uſeful, when applied to the direction of life, and to the ſervice of mankind; and that a perſon who giveth himſelf up to contemplation merely, and reſts in that as his whole buſineſs, is a far lower and more imperfect character, than he who entereth into active life, and applieth what knowledge he hath to the purpoſes of it. And whatever

ever the difference may be between the present and future state, particularly, as in the last, there will be no occasion for much of that activity and those services which are necessary in this world; yet we may be sure that powers made and intended for action as well as contemplation, shall have proper business and employment allotted to them; and that every one shall have his proper sphere of activity; but this will be so far from lessening that it will encrease the happiness of that state; it will be so far from weakening that it will strengthen the powers: And particularly, cannot be supposed to be inconsistent with the desirable acquisitions of the understanding, and especially with that knowledge of the *holy* which is the very summit and crown of all attainments of this kind. When we think of the human mind growing without end in the knowledge of God, and of the works of God, and of all truth and science, it doth indeed wonderfully raise the expectation, and please the believing mind. Never can men be so perfect in this respect, but that they may attain to still higher degrees. Thus, I think, we may say it must be, while our powers and capacities are the same, essentially the same; while the taste and desire of attaining knowledge continueth. An eternal duration in being, considered

[illegible] in this light, and with these advantages, is indeed a most grand and delightful object; and in which the heart cannot but exult.

Secondly, there may be a growth in the strength and delicacy of the holy affections, to which we cannot assign any limits. Heaven is represented as a state of perfection, and we see *the spirits of just men*, when they leave this world, are said to be made *perfect*. But I think we are not to imagine that this signifies their being advanced, all at once, to such degrees of perfection, as they shall never to all eternity exceed. Such a state, when compared to our present, may well be called perfect, as in it there is no sin, and men are set free from all moral infirmity, although there may be still great room for moral improvement. The angels in heaven are all perfect, yet there are higher and lower among them, and it could hardly enter into any man's mind, that the lower might not aspire after the attainments of such as are superior to them; those attainments, I mean, which have nothing peculiar in them, and which should appropriate them to a certain order, and the capacities peculiar to it. And, indeed, as the very highest orders are limited and finite creatures, it is hardly to be supposed, that they should ever become incapa-

ble

ble of progress in those graces which suit an Angelical state: It is hard to suppose that they were, at their first entering into existence, as perfect, in all respects, as ever they shall be through an eternal age. This supposition appears to be very unnatural. And, therefore, though the servants of God shall find their state perfect, when they are taken from this into the other world, and shall be presented without spot and blameless before the presence of Divine Glory, with exceeding joy; yet there must be room for growth and improvement in the perfection of their state; it is hardly conceivable that it should be otherwise. For instance, surely the more men know of God, the more ardently must they love him; and if their knowledge of God and his perfections may grow, certainly their love to him may and must grow likewise. Again, the more they know of the works of God, must not their estimation of the wisdom, and power and goodness of God, proportionably increase; and can any man imagine that our knowledge of the works of God, in this perfect state, will not be always growing? Is it then to be imagined, that the views of the Divine Glory and perfection will not be enlarging, and that our admiration and love to God will not be in proportion to these en-

Sect. I. larged views? Or can it enter into the mind, that ever, in any one inſtant, we ſhall know ſo much of this great and incomprehenſible object, that we can know no more? This is not, I think we may ſay, cannot be the caſe with the moſt exalted Seraph in Heaven. If then our knowledge of God is to grow without end, ſo likewiſe is our love, in its ſtrength and ardor. And we are ſure, that in proportion to our love to God, ſhall our aſſimilation to him, and our delight in him be. What a proſpect is here, and how raviſhing! In the ſame manner we may reaſon, concerning that bleſſed love and good will, by which the inhabitants of the upper world are joined and cemented together. The more perfect we are, the more perfect ſhall our love and charity be. And the more we love God, the more we ſhall love the brethren. If the one holy affection groweth, the other ſhall grow in proportion. And if theſe affections do at all grow in a perfect ſtate, why ſhall they not grow to all eternity in it? We can ſet no limit to this, more than we can to the duration of an eternal age. And as God hath endowed us with ſuch capacities of intellectual and moral improvement, as admit no certain limit; ſo he hath really given more into our poſſeſſion than any ſuppoſable certain meaſure or degree, which could have been

been at once conferred; for, by endleſs im- SERM. provement, any ſuch certain meaſure or de- I. gree might be exceeded. Improvement, which ſeemeth, in truth, to admit no bound, no certain bound, is indeed a great thing. We may likewiſe apply this to the delicacy of the affections, and to delicacy of taſte. In this there is an unſpeakable variety of degree. For example, all men know what excellency and beauty are; all men profeſs to diſcern it in the curious productions of the ſtatuary, of the painter, and of the poet. All men profeſs to admire it in the moral character; in purity, in generoſity, in faithfulneſs, in the tenderneſs of friendſhip, and ſuch excellencies as theſe; but it is apparent that all have not the ſame ſenſations, with reſpect to ſtrength and delicacy. Some are but little moved by the moſt illuſtrious characters, and by the moſt heroic actions. Others are ſeen to contemplate them with moſt tender ſenſibility, and with very great emotions. So, alſo, ſome of the moſt curious works of art are paſſed over by ſome men with little attention, while they fix others in the moſt pleaſing admiration of them. Now, this taſte, though, as all the other endowments of nature, it is originally the gift of God, yet is capable of very great improvement, by inſtruction and diſcipline, by cloſe obſervation and diligent attention: no one knows to

SERM. I. what perfection and delicacy it may be brought by theſe means. But in a perfect ſtate, how delicate may we ſuppoſe the taſte for things excellent and lovely to become; and how tender that ſenſibility? if ſuch delicacy and ſenſibility may be conſidered at all as a perfection in the human mind, then we may be ſure, in a perfect ſtate, we ſhall have it to a high degree. We know it may grow and improve as all our other powers; and that the delight ariſing from it, will be ſtill in proportion to the delicacy of it. How great, then, and continually increaſing, that delight? and this we may apply to all objects which are excellent and pleaſing; whether our own moral perfection, or that of others, or the glories and perfections of the Supreme Being, or the various particular objects of fruition which are given to us: in proportion to the delicacy of taſte, ſo will the fruition be; and if that delicacy improveth, ſo in proportion will our happineſs grow. Upon the whole, ſuch is our rational proſpect of eternity, or a duration without end or limit; in which the bleſſed inhabitant of the upper world looketh forward without any confinement of his proſpect, and foreſees the ſolid and ſubſtantial glories of his ſtate growing ſtill brighter and brighter, by an improvement, which in the nature of the thing admitteth no certain limit. Such is

eternal

eternal exiſtence to the faithful ſervants of God; ſuch that *eternal life*, which *by a patient continuance in well doing*, we are to *ſeek after*. It is, indeed, a ſubject of contemplation rather too great for the mind in its preſent ſtate: and as the human mind is formed for delighting in things which are grand and magnificent, ſo it here findeth an object perfectly ſuited to its wiſh. If we were to apprehend any period to our duration at all, this would unhappily cloud our proſpect. For be that duration ever ſo long, it muſt come at laſt to a period; whereas, a ſtate of happineſs which knows no end, is perfectly pleaſing. SERM. I.

Now, what is the condition upon which we are to obtain all this? not *beſtowing all our goods to feed the poor*, not *giving our bodies to be burned*; thanks be to God, we have no ſuch trials of our integrity; but a *patient continuance in well doing*. A courſe in life which while it enſures to us the glories of the upper world, is likewiſe greatly to the advantage of our preſent ſtate; which, were there no other world to be expected; a wiſe man would chooſe; and which indeed, in the nature of things, is neceſſary to make us meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light. Surely God hath dealt bountifully with the ſons of men. They are *the chief of his ways* in this

SERM. world, and accordingly hath he regarded
L them, and done for them. Intending them
for an eternal duration, he hath to this ſuited
the proviſion he hath made for them. Happy
are all thoſe, who at this day are in actual poſ-
ſeſſion of what God hath promiſed to all who
love him. They ſee and know in another
manner than we can, and no doubt enjoy
what is much above our moſt exalted pro-
ſpects, and hopes. And happy the perſons
who are in the way to ſuch high advance-
ment; and in whom human nature appeareth
in its proper dignity and luſtre, as forming
and preparing them for the world above.
But then, what pity is it, that ſuch a frame,
and ſuch powers, ſhould be proſtituted and
profaned by wicked works; and that ſuch ge-
nerous and great hopes, ſhould be given up
for any vitious and ſinful gratification what-
ſoever, in compliance with the *luſts of the*
eye, or *the luſts of the fleſh, or the pride of life?*
A poor price, ſuch gratification, for the
proſpect, the rational proſpect of immorta-
lity! There is infinity of value in what
theſe children of folly give up for poor,
mean, and contemptible pleaſures and en-
joyments. But alas! What ſhall we do for
that diſcernment which would reſcue us
from all ſuch folly? And that generoſity of
ſpirit, which would make us abhor what

is mean and unworthy of us; and which would, with enlarged and elevated views, prepare us for the uniform practice of virtue, as meat and drink to us? O! that the *ſpirit of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind*, might thoroughly poſſeſs our ſouls; and that the bleſſed genius of Chriſtianity were our guide in all our ways! However, whether *we will hear*, or whether *we will forbear*, theſe great things are clearly ſet before us; and according to the reception they now meet with from us, it will be with us hereafter. For the Apoſtle hath taught us, that as thoſe, *who by patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality*, ſhall inherit *eternal life*. So for *them who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh*, are in reſerve, *for every ſoul of man that doth evil*.

SERM. I.

SERMON II.

Moral Perfection the ultimate Intention of all the works and ways of God.

1 Cor. III. 9.

For we are labourers together with God; ye are God's Husbandry, ye are God's Building.

WHILE the Apostle in the words of the text, calleth Christians God's husbandry and God's building, it will bring to our minds two figurative representations of the church, which are frequently met with in the holy scriptures, namely, it is called a vine-yard, and an house or temple. I shall not need to quote any particular passages, for these figures often occur. The former intended to express that fruitfulness in the works of piety, righteousness, and charity,

charity, which may be expected from ſuch Serm.
as have been more particularly cared for and II.
cultivated, and who are repreſented as *trees which the Lord hath planted, and which he watereth, and pruneth*; the other figure rather denoting, what is the greateſt of all privileges the Church enjoyeth, that of being *the habitation of God through the ſpirit*. The church is the temple, the living temple, of the living God. And, agreeably to this figurative repreſentation of the church, we read of being built up or edified; and whatever tendeth to the growth and progreſs of chriſtians, is ſaid to edify them; and they themſelves are repreſented as living or lively ſtones, and to be built up a ſpiritual houſe; and it is in the ſame figurative way of ſpeaking that our bleſſed Saviour is repreſented to be the chief corner ſtone of the building. It is in a very poetical ſtrain that the Prophet Iſaiah expreſſeth himſelf upon this ſubject, in Chap. liv. 11: *O thou afflicted, toſſed with tempeſt, and not comforted; Behold, I will lay thy ſtones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with ſapphires; and I will make thy windows of agate, and thy gates of carbuncle, and all thy borders of pleaſant ſtones. And all thy children ſhall be taught of the Lord; and great ſhall be the peace of thy children.* This great work of God, in ſupporting and promoting

SERM. the cauſe of virtue and true religion, and in
II. bringing many ſons unto glory, as the Author of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews ſpeaketh, is undoubtedly the moſt excellent and important of all his works in this world, and this is what I ſhall, in the firſt place, in this diſcourſe particularly, illuſtrate.

Secondly ſhew, in conſequence of this, that we are not capable of any ſervices of ſo great moment, as thoſe by which this great work is in any ſort promoted and carried on; and, laſtly, ſhall make ſome practical reflections upon the ſubject. I am in the firſt place to ſhew, that this building of God is the moſt excellent and important of all his works in this world. To this purpoſe it will not be improper to take a general view of God's works in this world, and the ſubordination of them to one another, with reſpect to the ends they are deſtined to ſerve; as the inferior orders appear plainly to be made for the uſe of thoſe which are in rank above them. We ſee the whole vegetable world is ſupported and ſuſtained by the earth, which is ſeaſonably moiſtened from the clouds, that it may bring forth the various kinds of herbage, with which the face of it is covered. All this herbage is plainly contrived for the ſuſtenance of the world of life; and adapted by its variety to anſwer to the inſtincts of the

ſeveral

ſeveral kinds; by which inſtincts the indivi- Serm.
duals of each kind are directed to what is II.
proper for them. We cannot but think that animal life is a much more noble and excellent thing, than that of the plant of the field; and that there is a plain fitneſs and congruity in it, that this kind of life ſhould be ſupported and ſuſtained by thoſe various productions of the earth, which would be in a manner inſignificant, if they were not uſed to this purpoſe. When, again, we contemplate the various orders of animal life, as we ſee moſt of them are formed for ſubſiſting by the herb of the field, or by the fruit of the tree, ſo others are as plainly formed for preying upon animals of an inferior order; which is apparently the caſe with reſpect to the fiſhes of the ſea, and ſeveral of the fowls of the air, and beaſts of the earth which are creatures of prey, and make no uſe of herbage, but feed upon other animals, and are admirably fitted for this way of life, by thoſe arms and inſtruments of death with which the Author of Nature hath furniſhed them, and the ſuperior ſtrength with which he hath endowed them. It muſt have been plainly the original intention, that theſe kinds which are formed for prey ſhould be thus ſupported. Theſe things are often taken notice of in the holy ſcriptures, and the admirable contri-

vance

SERM. II. vance and wiſdom of the Creator appearing in them, celebrated in very fit and proper ſtrains. *Thou makeſt darkneſs*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, civ. 20. *and it is night, wherein all the beaſts of the Foreſt do creep forth; the young Lions roar after their prey, and ſeek their meat from God. The Sun ariſeth they gather themſelves together, and lay them down in their dens; Man goeth forth to his work, and labour until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wiſdom haſt thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide ſea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both great and ſmall beaſts. There is that Leviathan whom thou haſt made to play therein. Theſe all wait on thee, that thou mayeſt give them their meat in due ſeaſon. That thou giveſt them, they gather; thou openeſt thy hand, they are filled with good.* And ſo in many other places.

But what we are particularly to obſerve is, that by the Creator's donation, all theſe inferior orders are given into the power and poſſeſſion of Man; not only the plant of the field, and the fruit of the trees, which he ſhareth with the brutal creation, but likewiſe the brutal creation or world itſelf. Theſe are given him, as well as the herb, and fruit of the field, for his food and cloathing, and for his ſervice and entertainment.

ment. And how wonderfully are the ſeveral kinds fitted for the various uſes of mankind? The Ox, the Camel, the Horſe, the Elephant. Though ſome of theſe are of great ſtrength, and could ſoon deſtroy feeble man; yet ſo the wiſe and gracious Lord of the univerſe provided, that theſe creatures, endowed with ſuch ſtrength, and many of them in their natures fierce, yet are capable of being tamed and trained up to the ſervice of man, and they have particular inſtincts and affections which make them fit for this. *The Ox*, ſaith the Prophet Iſaiah, *knoweth his owner, and the Aſs his maſter's crib*. On the other hand, man endowed with the uſe of reaſon and with ſagacity and invention, is fit to exerciſe the dominion which the Creator hath given him over them, and maintain it. The ſtrength of the Leviathan and the Elephant, does not procure to theſe creatures which are called the chief of the ways of God, an exemption from their ſubjection to mankind. The Horſe, the Ox, are taught with meekneſs and patience to ſerve them. And the very birds and ſeveral beaſts of prey are taught, to take and kill their prey for the uſe of their maſter. Upon the whole, we ſee that as the vegetable life is contrived and formed for the ſupport of the animal, ſo both vegetable and animal are contrived and formed for the ſupport of man, and accordingly are put into his

Sect. II.

power.

SERM. II. power. Thus, as the ſuperior excellency of human nature appeareth from the excellency of thoſe powers with which it is endowed; ſo its high rank in the creation, and the eſtimation of it with the Creator, is evidently ſeen in that dominion over all, which is given to the children of men; whom the whole world is taught to acknowledge as the Lords of it.

But to purſue this argument a little farther, wherein doth the excellency of man principally conſiſt? Not ſurely either in ſtrength or beauty; not even in underſtanding and ſagacity; though theſe are valuable diſtinctions; but in goodneſs and righteouſneſs, in that which is the likeneſs and image of his Maker upon him. This is indeed his glory. Without this all other inſtances of his preeminence over the brutes ſerve only to render his ſtate infamous and himſelf abominable. His being at the very ſummit of the ſublunary creation, or his ſinking into a ſtate below that of the brutes which periſh, really dependeth upon his being righteous or wicked, and nothing elſe. Now, the plain conſequence of all is this, that as all the world was made for man, and as there is nothing really excellent in man but holineſs, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs, ſo the whole world hath been contrived and formed as a theatre in which theſe might obtain and prevail; and without direct

reſpect

respect to these, and to the happiness annex- Serm.
ed to them, it would not have had a being. II.
The relations of things in the world plainly point this out. So that this building of God, of which the Apostle speaketh, that is, the interest of truth, piety, and virtue, were the very end for which the work of creation was designed and executed.

But why may we not extend our thoughts beyond this world? Must not the case be the same with respect to all worlds and systems whatsoever, whether more low and gross like ours, or more spiritualized and refined? Is it conceiveable that there can be any thing in them more excellent than righteousness and purity, or any thing in them to be compared with it? And must not this then, and the happiness enjoyed by the creatures possessed of it, be the end, the sole end, of the Creator in making these worlds? Can any one assign another end equal to this? Any one but this which is worthy of the Creator? From which it will follow, that without this as the great end, and therefore the original motive, the universe itself would have had no existence? All this appears to me evidently just, and founded upon unquestionable principles; and must not that be indeed excellent and important, for the sake of which the universe hath its being

SERM. II. being, and without a view to which it never would have been made? I think this muſt ſtrike the attentive, and ſhew them with what earneſtneſs they ought to purſue after righteouſneſs and moral perfection, and how high it muſt ſtand in the eſtimation of our Creator; not only as the moſt excellent thing we can conceive, but that for the ſake of which alone this vaſt univerſe was brought into being: After what hath been ſaid, it will not be wondered at, for it muſt be expected, that the whole conduct of Providence ſhould be calculated to promote righteouſneſs; that this ſhould be the end and intention of the laws of God: that it ſhould be the ultimate intention of all the diſpenſations of Providence; and that the ſupreme Arbiter of the univerſe ſhould, by all poſſible means, promote righteouſneſs in his own creation: Nor can we wonder at the moſt extraordinary interpoſitions to ſerve this end. Theſe have indeed been many, and very wondrous: But the moſt extraordinary is, that God ſpared not his own ſon, but gave him up to the death, for this ſole purpoſe. He came from Heaven to deſtroy and overthrow the kingdom of ſatan, and of darkneſs, and to erect a kingdom of truth and righteouſneſs in the world. He came *by death to deſtroy him that had the power of death, and to deliver*

deliver them, who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage. Heb. iii. 14. This event doth wonderfully illustrate God's love of righteousness. It must be a great and most important purpose, which the infinite wisdom of God would serve, in such a way as this. No interposition, which can be imagined, is like it. It really overwhelms the mind with wonder. But, then, on the other hand, when we consider moral excellency, and perfection, as the greatest thing in the works of God, and that for the sake of which alone, the universe hath a being, we cannot wonder that the wisdom of God would take every possible measure to promote it; and we shall become thoroughly reconciled to the scriptural accounts of the incarnation, the sufferings, the death, resurrection, and kingdom of our Saviour; how surprising soever these accounts may appear: This rests upon an unquestionable principle, that it becometh the wisdom of God, to serve that which is the end of the creation by any means, how extraordinary soever, which the creation can afford. This is plainly natural. Serm. II.

But, as the conclusion of this head, let me observe, that what hath been said upon it, hath been said to very little purpose, unless it hath some influence in begetting, or increasing

Serm. II. creating in our hearts the love of righteouſneſs, as a thing of the greateſt excellency, and of the very greateſt importance. Could we but ſee as we ought to do, how ſhould we love what is morally excellent, how ſhould we hate what is morally deformed and vile! The very being of the univerſe bears teſtimony in favour of it; and all its magnificence, and glory, ſheweth us what an excellent thing moral righteouſneſs is; and, the language of every heart harmoniſeth with the voice of nature, and of the univerſe; in every conſcience, there is a witneſs to it. How much, then, are we out of nature, if we do not love it? How much more, if we diſlike, and, corrupted by our luſts, have conceived an averſion againſt it? If we love to walk in the crooked and perverſe paths of vice and immorality, and to do thoſe things which are evil; thwarting and contradicting the deſign of nature, and of the God of nature, and becoming ſtains in the creation, inſtead of being ornaments to it. And, how ought we to deteſt thoſe luſts, which tend to lead us ſo far aſtray? Theſe are in truth, our enemies, they are our ruin and deſtruction. Let us never be at peace with them, give them no harbour in our breaſts, but with a pious, which is likewiſe a moſt generous diſdain, caſt them out.

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SERM. II.

I come now to the second subject of discourse, namely, that we are not capable of any services of so great moment, as those by which this great work is promoted and carried on. This is no more than a just and necessary consequence of what I have been endeavouring to illustrate. For surely, if that great building of God is the most important of all his works, then those services and offices, by which it is carried on, may well be said to be of the greatest moment. God might, no doubt, have communicated much perfection and happiness to individuals, without having joined them together in those connections with, and relations to one another, which we see fixed in the present plan of his administration. But a little thinking and attention, will convince us, that such a state of things must be far from being as excellent and happy as the present, which giveth so large occasion for the exercise of benevolent affections, and of beneficence, the noblest things which we can frame any idea of, and the most divine. As things are now ordered, individuals cannot work out the work of their own salvation, without assisting others. They cannot perform the duties required of them, without being helpful to their neighbours. Many of the duties required of each person have a direct reference to others, and

Sect. 24. the good and advantage of others, is plainly
II. the object purſued. And as God hath given us laws and precepts binding thoſe ſocial duties upon us, ſo he has originally planted in the heart of man affections which are ſtrong incentives to ſervices of this kind, and in the exerciſe of which, we taſte the pureſt pleaſure and joy. Thus we are joined together, and the great building of God is carried on by the means, and inſtrumentality of what the individuals, each in his place, contribute to the completion of it. This is a ſubject much inſiſted on in the holy ſcriptures, particularly in the writings of the Apoſtle *Paul*: He compareth the body of Chriſt, that is, the Church, to the natural body, in which many members are joined together in one Syſtem, in different ſtations, as eyes, ears, hands, feet, and every member, hath its particular office and function aſſigned it for the good of the whole; and no member can be cut off from the body, but the body muſt ſuffer: *So*, ſays he, 1 *Cor.* xii. 27. *Ye are the body of Chriſt, and members in particular; members one of another.* Now, I ſay, what men contribute by their ſervices to the completion and perfection of the building of God, may well be conſidered as the moſt important ſervices of human life. Is there not great honour in being workers together with

God,

God, for so in the holy scriptures his servants are called? To an ingenuous mind, it must be a strong incentive to action, that men are made capable, and have an opportunity of assisting in that which is more peculiarly the work of God. Surely, nothing can be more honourable than this relation to him, who is the most high, the possessor of heaven and earth. Is not the end of the whole, the eternal perfection and happiness of that great body, the very greatest of all interests, the very greatest we can conceive? Is any thing equal to it? Do we not, in acting our part aright, gratify the most honourable and excellent affections of the heart, and the most divine? And, do we not find our own private account likewise in all this, and lay up a good foundation for ourselves against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life? But let us consider these works and services, by which the building of God is perfected and compleated in the comparative light, and see how they appear when compared with our other works, the object of which is temporal, the influence of which doth not reach beyond this world; and to judge aright in this matter, let us imagine ourselves, so far as imagination in our present low state will carry us, let us imagine our-

SERM. II.

Sect. II. selves, I say, beholding the great building of God, as at the last, in all its parts perfected. A vast body joined together by the bonds of sacred love, in the most perfect delight and harmony of spirit; each enjoying human nature, himself in the most perfect state of it, and each rejoicing in the perfection and happiness of his neighbour; the very best affections exercised, and which yield the highest and purest delight, without interruption; all the desires of knowing and converging with the noblest objects, gratified to the utmost; and above all, each individual filled with all the fullness of God. Imagine we see this glorious assembly in this happy state, and having the perpetuity of it ensured by the unchangeable goodness of God, and by his express declarations and promises; how glorious is the object? What external light and splendor may be shed upon them, of which the scriptures in some places speak in high strains, we know not; nor, indeed, is any thing of this kind much connected with rational and human felicity. But whatever advantages of this sort may contribute to their happiness, we may be sure the servants of God will enjoy; and we are particularly taught, that they will be fashioned like the glorious body of Christ; and will have an external form suitable to the perfection of

the

the mind. Now, I ſay, let us imagine our-
ſelves beholding this glorious body; and, SERM. II.
ſurely, there muſt be the moſt pleaſing ſatiſ-
faction attending the conſciouſneſs of our
having laboured, as we had opportunity,
while upon earth, in carrying on the great
work. Of this labour, there ſhall be the
moſt honourable and laſting monuments. Let
us compare with it, thoſe labours of which
the fruit is intirely confined to this world;
and in the comparative light, it really ap-
peareth of little ſignificance. One perſon
has riſen early, and ſat up late, and has eaten
the bread of ſorrow, and care, and anxiety
all his days; his deſign has been to make a
great fortune; ſuppoſe he has ſucceeded, yet
at that period, we are now imagining what
is become of it, where doth it appear? An-
nother has raiſed himſelf to an high and ho-
nourable ſtation upon earth, and great power,
and authority; a third, has, perhaps, made
great conqueſts, made the world about him
tremble; but, what is now become of that
power and aurhority, and of theſe acquiſi-
tions? They are no more. As the Poet
ſpeaketh, *they are gone like the baſeleſs fabric of a viſion, and not a wreck or ruin left be-
hind.* This is the caſe, in fine, with re-
ſpect to all the children of this world. The
mere children of it, they have buſtled, they
have

have inceſſantly laboured; but all is gone for
II. ever, and no memorial left. Far otherwiſe is it, indeed, with the Children of wiſdom, whoſe works of piety, and virtue, are an everlaſting foundation; and who ſhall for ever rejoice in the fruits of their righteouſneſs and charity; and, therefore, muſt reflect upon life with exquiſite pleaſure and ſatisfaction. By all this is not meant that negligence of the affairs of this world, is a virtue, or that men ſhould be indolent, thoughtleſs, and without concern about the buſineſs of it. No, religion teaches us no ſuch thing; on the contrary, teaches us to be diligent and induſtrious. But, when men, merely with a view to this world, labour and toil, their works are really of little ſignificancy, or moment, when compared with thoſe of which the fair monuments will be everlaſting. And indeed religion will teach us the happy art, ſo to conduct life, and the buſineſs of it, that this may well be brought into the account of our works of righteouſneſs, and religious obedience. Where men act their part with ſincere piety of intention, and with a direct deſign of ſerving the true ends of life, this halloweth and conſecrateth the whole, as ſervice done to God, and it ſhall be accordingly accepted and rewarded. But the mere labours of this world, and in purſuance

pursuance of the spirit of it, are of small account, when compared with those greater, &c. which make a part of the building of God, and which will appear in their glory, when not only the pyramids of *Egypt*, but the everlasting mountains, and the perpetual hills, shall be no more; and earth, and all the works in it, shall be lost in one common ruin.

I shall now conclude the discourse with some few reflections.

First, we see the great thing in which we should labour for ourselves and others; namely, carrying on, so far as we have power and influence, the work and building of God, the cause and interest of truth and virtue. Upon this our hearts ought to be set; and all ends and purposes of an inferior nature, are to be pursued in subordination to this. The professors of the religion of Christ have been, in the several ages of the Christian church, divided, unhappily divided, into many parties, and denominations, and have used various modes of worship, various rites and ceremonies. Some have come nearer primitive simplicity; some have been very distant from it. But it is still to be supposed, that all who are sincere, though in different ways, and by different means, aim at the same great end, the edifying of the body of Christ.

And

And ſo far as we have attained, we are in this reſpect to walk by the ſame rule, and to mind the ſame things; thoſe things in which the ſincere may differ among themſelves, can, indeed, be but of ſmall moment, when compared with thoſe, in which they do, and muſt agree; and if there are, who value themſelves more upon their being of this or that denomination of Chriſtians, than upon their being Chriſtians, they know not yet the true Chriſtian Spirit. What we are to labour moſt, for ourſelves and others, is, that we may be good men, that we may be living members of the body of Chriſt: Upon this great thing our zeal ought principally to be beſtowed; and other things of leſſer importance are to be attended to, only in ſubordination to this. And, Oh! How happy muſt be the ſtate of things in that world, where peace and good-will ſhall eternally reign; and when there either ſhall be no difference of opinion and ſentiment, or that difference ſhall be no wiſe hurtful.

In the mean time, we know but in part, and are liable to very great errors and miſtakes; and while Chriſtians are in fact, divided into various parties, and denominations, ſo far as we are called to act our part in ſuch matters, there is nothing left for us, but that among the contending parties, we

ſhould

should judge for ourselves, what is most agreeable to the will of God, what may most effectually answer the declared ends of religion, and to follow that with sincerity; in the mean time, maintaining love and charity towards all, of whatever denomination, who call upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart,

SERM. II.

SERMON

SERMON III.

The nature of Enthuſiaſm, and the marks, whereby the irrational heats of it are to be diſtinguiſhed from a natural and becoming warmth of affection, and a ſuitable fervour of ſpirit in religion.

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2 Cor. V. 13.

For whether we be beſides ourſelves, it is to God: Or, whether we be ſober, it is for your cauſe.

WE find from ſeveral paſſages in the Epiſtles to the Corinthians, particularly in this laſt, that there was in that Church a ſtrong party, who were very unfavourable to the Apoſtle *Paul*, endeavouring to detract from his character, and leſſen the

the value of his labours, exalting others at his expence, who were content to be the leaders and heads of such a party. Against these factious persons, and especially the heads of them, the Apostle writeth, in the vindication of himself, with great warmth, and representeth the part they acted, and the principles upon which they acted, as very corrupt, animadverting upon them with a severity which was perfectly just. And it is very probable he had these persons in his eye in this passage; for in the preceding verse, he tells the Corinthians, *for we commend not ourselves again to you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that you may have something to answer them, which glory in appearance and not in heart*; which plainly refers to those false Apostles, who had occasioned such divisions in the Church; and, as it is likely enough, that some of them might represent him as an enthusiast, or a madman, he very properly lets them know, that whatever he was, and whatever part he had acted, whether it should appear distracted, or sober, it all flowed from a principle of zeal for God, of love to men, and concern for their salvation. *For whether we be besides ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.* As if he had said, these men may say what they will of us, but we

are cautious to ourselves, that what we have done is from the best and worthiest principles, and such as always ought to obtain in every Christian, and especially became persons entirely devoted to Christ in the ministry of the gospel, adding in the fourteenth verse, *for the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live to themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

The charge or imputation which the Apostle here insinuateth had been laid against him, has been brought against many others, who, while they acted upon the best principles, and agreeable to the soundest wisdom, have been looked upon as persons bereaved of their senses. But *as the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the sight of God*, so, indeed, that which is wisdom in his sight, hath been often looked upon as foolishness in the world. Men who have not a sense of God upon their minds, and are not animated by his love, who set little value upon holiness, and virtue, which are our highest glory and happiness, who look upon present enjoyments only as substantial, and have their portion upon earth, entirely negligent of that which is to come; when they see persons

ſons acting upon the principles of the Chriſtian religion, and walking by faith, and in purſuance of this, making it their conſtant principal ſtudy and care to pleaſe God, and to advance themſelves in virtue, for this cauſe denying themſelves, and ſubmitting to many ſeverities in the courſe of their lives, looking down with contempt upon all intereſts which come into competition with a good conſcience, and even ready to ſacrifice their lives in ſupport of the cauſe of truth and virtue; when they ſee perſons, I ſay, acting in this manner, no wonder they ſhould look upon them as beſides themſelves, and in a kind of diſtraction. Eſpecially, it muſt appear to be madneſs, to ſuch as are profeſſed unbelievers, and who pay no regard to thoſe ſacred truths, by which the lives of the diſciples of Chriſt are to be entirely regulated. But, though many, who may be accounted by the unthinking and unbelieving world, madmen, are in truth, in matters of religion, acting the wiſeſt part, and laying up for themſelves a good foundation, that they may lay hold on eternal life; yet it is certain, that there have been many inſtances in the world of ſuch enthuſiaſm, as is really a religious phrenzy, and by which men have been led, into the greateſt, and wildeſt

ſome wildeſt extravagancies; when reaſon ſeemeth to have been in a great meaſure loſt, and a fanſies unbridled imagination hath carried all before it. This moſt dangerous diſtemper of the mind, hath in ſome perſons riſen to a very frightful degree, and which no ſober obſerver could behold without amazement; but there are degrees of it leſs perceptible, which yet may be very hurtful. And, there is not, perhaps, any point, in which our pains can be better beſtowed, than in learning how to diſtinguiſh between an enthuſiaſtic ſpirit, and that warmth, and thoſe ardors of holy affection, that fervor and intention of the powers in matters of religion, which have their foundation in reaſon and truth, and which are perfectly according to right nature. This is the more neceſſary, as there may be ſome danger, when men would avoid enthuſiaſm, of running into the other extreme, and looking upon all religious fervor of ſpirit, and the lively exerciſe of the beſt and worthieſt affections, as unnatural; hence, contracting a coldneſs and indifference in all ſuch matters, a perfect languor, and a kind of a paralytic ſtate of mind, if I may uſe ſuch an expreſſion, and which undoubtedly, muſt be of the worſt conſequence.

I ſhall,

I ſhall, therefore, make ſome obſervations upon enthuſiaſm, tending to explain the nature of it; and ſhall. in the next place, ſhew how different a thing this is from thoſe lively feelings of heart, that warmth of affection, and fervor of ſpirit in religion, which as they are perfectly natural and rational, ſo are of the greateſt uſe, while, at the ſame time, they yield the greateſt pleaſure. SERM. III.

Enthuſiaſm, in general, may be underſtood to ſignify a man's acting under an apprehenſion of a preſent divine energy upon his mind, to which all his powers are ſuppoſed to be ſubjected, and by which he is carried on, without attention to any thing elſe as his guide. It is eaſy to ſee what effects this muſt produce, where a perſon is miſtaken in ſuch apprehenſion. We read in the Antients, many accounts and deſcriptions of enthuſiaſm, in which we ſee, they looked upon it as attended frequently, not only with great and uncommon emotions of mind, but, likewiſe, with wonderful agitations of body, which were ſaid to be the effect of the Divinity then poſſeſſing the perſons, all their ſpeeches and actions, at that time, directed by that power, upon which they themſelves had no influence. We read, in the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, likewiſe, of the Prophets of *Baal*, and of the Prophets of the

SERM. III. groves; and you ſee, in the firſt book of *Kings*, and eighteenth Chapter, that *Elijah*, the Prophet of the true God, called upon them to put that great matter which was in debate between him and them, concerning what God the *Iſraelites* were to worſhip, to a fair trial; propoſing, that they ſhould chooſe one bullock, and he another, for ſacrifice, that each ſhould prepare it in their own way, but that no fire ſhould be put under them upon the altar; and that the God, who being called upon, ſhould anſwer by a miraculous fire, to conſume the ſacrifice, ſhould be acknowledged for the true God. The Prophets of *Baal*, whether obliged to put the matter to this iſſue by the people, or confident in the power of their God, gave their conſent to this propoſal; and, indeed, it would ſeem from their calling ſo long upon *Baal*, and uſing their ſtrange frantic methods of prevailing with him, that they imagined he might anſwer them. *But there was neither voice*, as the hiſtorian tells us, *nor any to anſwer, nor any that regarded.* But what I quote this paſſage for, is, the account the hiſtorian giveth us of their behaviour. *They cried aloud, they leaped upon the altar, they cut themſelves with knives and lancets, till the blood guſhed out upon them*; this, in their language,

guage, was called *propheſying*. Strange ima- SERM.
gination, that ſuch frantic behaviour ſhould III.
be an effectual method of engaging the Di-
vinity to appear for them. Some modern inſtances there have been of enthuſiaſm, even in the Chriſtian world, where perſons have thought themſelves inſpired, where they have uttered propheſies, and where the extaſies, they have been in, have been attended with very ſtrange convulſions and agitations of body, and the whole ſcene was quite unnatural. A famous late inſtance of this in a neighbouring kingdom, ſhewed evidently, that the perſons who were principally concerned, did really believe they were inſpired; and in making this pretence, did not knowingly impoſe upon the world; for they uttered a propheſy, that one of their brethren, who was lately dead, ſhould be miraculouſly raiſed to life again, and the very day when this ſhould be done was predicted; and nothing but the event, which did not at all anſwer, could convince them that this was all deluſion. Such is the power of an imagination which enthuſiaſm hath inflamed. But the true Prophets of God always have been, and always will be diſtinguiſhed from ſuch enthuſiaſts, by credentials fully ſufficient to convince, not themſelves only, but all the attentive and impartial world about them.

SERM. III. And ſo it was you ſee, in the caſe of *Elijah* already mentioned, when contending with the Prophets of *Baal*. When at the time of offering the evening ſacrifice, he drew near, and called upon the God of *Iſrael*, praying, that he might appear in vindication of his own honour, he was anſwered by fire from heaven, which miraculouſly deſcended, and conſumed the burnt offering.

But, not to enlarge upon ſuch wild extravagancies of enthuſiaſm, let us conſider ſome of the leſs remarkable kinds of it, which may be very hurtful to perſons who are under its power; what can tend to lead men more aſtray, than judging of their ſtate towards God, from certain vehement emotions excited upon ſome occaſions in their ſouls, ſudden and unaccountable tranſports of joy, and ſtrong impreſſions made upon their ſpirits, for which they can aſſign no good reaſon? How bold and aſſured have ſome men become by theſe, whoſe lives were not at all anſwerable to ſuch pretenſions? Surely, the plain way to judge concerning ourſelves, and our real ſtate towards God, is to conſider the terms of our acceptance, which are laid before us in the holy ſcriptures, and to try whether we have come up to them. To look into the diſtinguiſhing characters of thoſe who are born of God, and of the new nature,

nature, and to ſee whether they are found upon us; to try whether the ſpirit of Chriſt dwelleth in us, by the fruit of it, which is in all goodneſs, and righteouſneſs and truth; in a word, to try whether the love of God and charity, whether purity, meekneſs, temperance, patience, and the other graces, are found in us; and thence to pronounce concerning ourſelves. But to neglect thoſe things, and depend upon ſtrong impreſſions unaccountably made upon our minds, or ſome ſudden and vehement emotions, may delude us indeed to our ruin. Theſe may well be called enthuſiaſm. Again, it hath been the miſtaken way of ſome very good and ſerious perſons to judge concerning the ſucceſs of their prayers, and their being anſwered, from the preſent impreſſions made upon their minds, and emotions raiſed in them; and ſome have carried this ſo far, as to take upon them to predict certain future events, from what they felt in themſelves in prayer. For this, as there is no warrant from reaſon or ſcripture, ſo many have found themſelves grievouſly miſtaken; and the events have not at all anſwered their expectation. In the ſame ſort, ſome have taken their counſels and meaſures for the conduct of life from ſuch impreſſions made upon them, and have gone on, as under a kind of inſpiration, when a

SERM. III.

SERM. III. little attention to ſound reaſon would have fully convinced them that they were wrong. And how many have governed themſelves, almoſt intirely in the very greateſt undertakings, by ſtrong impulſes which they looked upon as an immediate call from the ſpirit of God? And to add no more inſtances, even in matters of ſpeculation, and with reſpect to truth and error, men have been determined by inward impreſſions, rather than by evidence appearing to the mind; and have framed their judgment by what they felt, rather than what they ſaw, and diſcerned of proof. Nay, ſome have taught that faith itſelf, the faith of the goſpel, was to be conſidered as a thing infuſed into the mind; and in this ſenſe underſtand the phraſes in ſcripture, where it is ſaid to be the gift of God. Meaning, that a ſtrong perſuaſion was begot in the mind, though men could give no reaſon at all for it, a perſuaſion they knew not why. And many have in this unreaſonable perſuaſion, with reſpect to particular tenets, been moſt furiouſly zealous, when a little calm and impartial enquiry would have ſhewn them that they were quite wrong. Much of ſuch zeal there hath been in the world, which had no foundation but ſuch enthuſiaſm, and accordingly it hath been found in all parties, and religious denomina-

tions. But it was not my intention to go through all the kinds of enthuſiaſm, or mention all the inſtances of it, which would be a very laborious taſk, and to very little purpoſe; theſe inſtances, which I have taken notice of are enough to ſhew you what I mean by enthuſiaſm; vehement and ſtrong impreſſions, and impulſes, which are ſuppoſed to be from the ſpirit of God. And in all ſuch, there is this to be obſerved, that the rational powers have little or nothing to do with them: no inquiry, no calm deliberation, no comparing things with the maxims of reaſon, or the firſt principles of religion, ſo as to form a rational judgement; but the mind carried vehemently along, all giving way to what is thought to be a divine energy. And, indeed, the mind in ſuch perſons loſeth in a great meaſure the free exerciſe of its powers, and is generally in a ſtate of tumult and perturbation, which not only extravagant and wild imaginations, but even violent agitations of the body, do often demonſtrate; and, when the ſerenity and compoſure of the mind are thus loſt, it is no wonder it ſhould become the ſport of capricious fancy, and be hurried into any wildneſs of thought or action. SERM. III.

I cannot help obſerving, in concluſion, that enthuſiaſm, in the proper ſenſe of that word,

SERM. III. which I have endeavoured to explain to you, ſeems to owe its riſe to a principle, which is not only true, but of great importance, namely, that of a divine agency upon the minds of men. Enthuſiaſm evidently goes upon this principle, though it moſt grievouſly miſapplieth it. That there is ſuch an agency of the Supreme Being upon the minds of men, is not to be doubted. The holy ſcriptures ſpeak of it in the ſtrongeſt terms; and it is perfectly conſiſtent with reaſon. We find in numberleſs inſtances, that God hath declared his will to his ſervants in an extraordinary manner, and by immediate revelations; not only making known to them what he would have them to do, but predicting future events, which no underſtanding of a mortal could have foreſeen. And though we cannot tell how they diſcerned theſe things to be the inſpirations of the Almighty, yet no doubt. the perſons thus inſpired were fully ſatisfied, ſo that it was not poſſible for them not to believe. And where the world about them were concerned in theſe revelations, the Prophets were furniſhed with ſufficient credentials to convince all impartial enquirers of the reality of them. Now, we have no reaſon to expect ſuch extraordinary revelations; but have ſtill reaſon to expect, and muſt ſtill depend upon, the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God in an ordinary way, that is, by countenancing

nancing and aiding us in the uſe of the pow- SERM. ers which he hath given us, which undoubt- III. edly he can ſtrengthen. Our underſtandings, our affections, our active powers, are all his workmanſhip; in his hand they are, by his power they are ſubſiſted; and he, who gave them, can no doubt aſſiſt us in the uſe of them, and it is what he hath graciouſly promiſed to do. But it will be a ſure preſervative from the abuſe of this principle to the purpoſes of enthuſiaſm, to remember always, that the ſpirit of God worketh upon the minds of men by the means of their rational powers, and not without them; that he deals with them as reaſonable creatures which are to believe upon evidence, and to act upon principle; that he enlightens the underſtanding to diſcern objects aright, but does not beget perſuaſion without diſcernment; that he aſſiſts men in acting, but does not prompt them by blind and unaccountable impulſes; that his operations are all uniform, and of a piece, perfectly conſonant to right reaſon and unchangeable truth; that he doth not cauſe tumults in, and perturbation of mind, but ſo influenceth, as to preſerve the ſerenity and compoſure of it. But this matter will be further explained by what is to be ſaid upon the next head of diſcourſe, which was, to ſhew how different from enthuſiaſm thoſe lively feelings of heart

are,

SERM. III. are, that warmth of affection and fervor of ſpirit in religion, which, as they are perfectly rational and natural, ſo are of the greateſt uſe, while at the ſame time they yield the greateſt pleaſure.

It hath been already obſerved, that while men ſtudiouſly avoid enthuſiaſm, they may be in danger (for ſuch is the weakneſs of human nature in its preſent ſtate) of falling into the contrary extreme, and contracting a culpable languor and inſenſibility of ſpirit in matters of religion; which ought always to be conſidered as a moſt dangerous diſtemper, as it ſeemeth to be a very general one in the preſent age.

Warmth of affection towards God and the Redeemer, emotions of ſpirit in contemplating the divine greatneſs and goodneſs, and the aſtoniſhing ſcenery of the inviſible world, which the goſpel hath preſented to us as the objects of our faith, are not only rational, and natural, and manly, but, indeed, may be ſaid to be the neceſſary concomitants of a lively faith, and a ſerious attention to thoſe objects; and that there ſhould be a rapturous joy in a rational and juſt application of the goſpel promiſes to ourſelves, is obvious and indiſputable. It is true, indeed, theſe feelings will, in different perſons, be different, according to the greater or leſs ſenſibility of their ſpirits, and

and delicacy of their ſenſations. But, where there is any ſenſibility, where there are any affections which become humanity, ſurely, ſuch objects, as I have now mentioned, muſt, if ſeriouſly attended to, excite them to the moſt lively exerciſe. To illuſtrate this, let us attend a little to the frame and workings of our minds in other reſpects, and towards other objects. SERM. III.

In the material world, what is vaſtly great begets in us a pleaſing admiration; what is beautiful, we look on with delight. The grand works of nature, or of art, or ſuch as diſcover exquiſite contrivance and deſign, or are executed in the fineſt and beſt manner, always give us ſenſible pleaſure, and cauſe certain agreeable emotions of mind. That kind of beauty which is ſeen in the various orders of the world of life, eſpecially in our own ſpecies, and thoſe works of human art which are an imitation of it, ſuch as ſculpture and painting, pleaſe ſtill more, and more engage the attention of the admiring mind. We account that taſte which giveth the greateſt ſenſibility in theſe things a perfection in nature, and a very high one, and look upon inſenſibility to all ſuch things as a reproachful defect. But we find this ſenſibility, and the emotions, which in purſuance of it are raiſed in the mind, with reſpect to moral characters,

ſtill

SERM. III. ſtill greater. Let any man of diſcernment in moral objects, have a character of high diſtinction in purity, fortitude and reſolution, in conſtancy and fidelity, ſet before him; let him ſee theſe virtues tried to the utmoſt, in the moſt painful trials, conquering and coming out like gold from the fire, and he cannot but admire, love and delight in them. Nay, and in attending to ſome one very heroic action, how will the ſoul be moved? How will the very animal frame be affected? And will not all acknowledge that theſe ſtrong and moving ſenſations, are moſt natural and commendable? And the character is accounted deſpicable, in which no ſuch thing is found. But to ſhew how much and deeply the mind is affected by thoſe beauties and graces of the moral kind, and with what a ſtrong inclination it uniteth itſelf to the objects in which they are found, let the entertainment and delight which ſpring from the tenderneſſes of ſacred intimate friendſhip teſtify, and thoſe workings in the heart of love, eſteem, and ſympathy, which are ſo ſenſible and affecting. Surely, all theſe are moſt natural and becoming the heart of man. Now, from this frame, and thoſe affections planted in us, we may judge how the heart may be, how it ought to be touched in our contemplation and converſe with the objects of religion, with the greatneſs

neſs and excellency, the goodneſs and love of the Supreme Being, appearing in all his works; with the aſtoniſhing grace, and condeſcenſion, the friendſhip and love of him who died for us; with the vaſtneſs of thoſe proſpects which are opened to us by faith; and the amazing greatneſs of the world of ſpirits, and thoſe numberleſs multitudes which conſtitute the family of God. Surely, to feel admiration, the higheſt reverence, the moſt ardent love and gratitude glowing in the heart, one would think ſhould be the moſt natural of all things, when we ſeriouſly contemplate the parent of all. SERM. III.

Or, ſhall we, without wonder, behold infinite contrivance and wiſdom? The vaſtneſs and inexpreſſibly magnificence of the works of God, without any emotion? Shall our thoughts be fixed upon ſpotleſs purity, upon unchangeable goodneſs, upon a being whoſe very eſſence is love, whoſe beneficiaries we conſtantly and moſt eminently are, without love, without gratitude? Shall we behold in the croſs of our Saviour unſpeakable excellency, conflicting with the greateſt ſuffering and diſtreſs, bearing this with the greateſt conſtancy and reſignation, bearing it on our account, and for our ſakes, without emotion? Shall not the wonders of grace make a deep impreſſion upon our minds, that grace which

SERM. III. ſo conſpicuouſly appeared in the interpoſition of the Son of God, the moſt amazing event in the whole of the divine adminiſtration? Certainly, the moſt lively exerciſes of love and gratitude, and the greateſt ſenſibility to theſe matchleſs objects of them, infinitely become us: And to be cold and unmoved by ſuch things as theſe, ſpeaketh a very undeſirable ſtate of the mind. Again, how glorious the proſpects which are ſet before us? How high the dignity of thoſe illuſtrious conquerors, to whom it is promiſed by our bleſſed Saviour, that they ſhall be ſet down with him upon his throne, as he alſo overcame, and is ſet down with the Father upon his throne? And how doth the aſſurance of an endleſs duration in ſuch an honourable and happy ſtate affect the mind? Is it to be wondered at, that the joy of a Chriſtian in believing ſhould riſe into rapture, and that the greateſt activity, and zeal, and delight in the ſervice of God, ſhould attend it, that the moſt lively vigour ſhould animate all the powers, and that the joy of the Lord ſhould give an invincible ſtrength? In a word, in the greatneſs, excellency, and lovelineſs of thoſe divine objects, the believing and attentive find what above all things elſe raiſeth admiration, love, gratitude, and all thoſe affections, which are the moſt ſenſible and powerful, as well

as

as the moſt delightful to the mind. But what I principally aim at, is, that thoſe emotions of ſoul are moſt natural; and that if they are at all to be called enthuſiaſtic, that enthuſiaſm is of a moſt excellent kind, greatly to be deſired, carefully to be cultivated and encouraged. SERM. III.

But you will eaſily ſee how this happy and moſt delightful ſtate of the ſoul is to be diſtinguiſhed from the wild enthuſiaſm which was treated of in the firſt part of this diſcourſe. The one is quite natural and rational, no more than the fruit of a proper improvement of our underſtanding, and exerciſe of our beſt affections. The other hath nothing to do with reaſon, and indeed is a kind of phrenzy. The one is tumultuous, attended with great agitations of mind, and even of body; the other is all compoſure and ſerenity, all uniform, and worthy of the very beſt and moſt perfect ſtate of the mind; not weakening the rational powers, but giving them additional life and vigour. In the exerciſe of theſe holy and devout affections, ariſing from the diſcerned excellency of the object, the mind perceiveth itſelf right, and the very feeling of the ſoul juſtifies itſelf; but in the other, wild and unaccountable imaginations take place; and the moſt extravagant reſveries paſs upon men for divine infuſions.

But

SERM. III. But how great is the miſtake, if avoiding enthuſiaſm, we ſhould go into coldneſs and lifeleſs indifferency in matters of religion; unconcerned to have thoſe lively feelings of the powers of what the Apoſtle calleth the world to come, that is the kingdom of grace, and of glory, which ſo much become believers; unconcerned about the vigorous exerciſe of the beſt and worthieſt affections, and whether we feel ourſelves alive as Chriſtians; engaging in religious ſervices, and ſolemnities without ſpirit, without delight to ourſelves, and without advantage; and ſo the great ends of all religion defeated and loſt? Surely, againſt this we ought carefully to guard; againſt this, which I am afraid is too common a diſtemper. To diſtinguiſh the true power and life of godlineſs from all irrational heats of enthuſiaſm, I have made the foregoing remarks, but to recommend life, and a vigorous exerciſe of our powers in religious matters, was a principal part of the deſign of this diſcourſe. It ought to be our endeavour to ſtir up our good affections, to keep the mind conſtantly under the power of them, to preſerve always the feelings, which are ſuitable to thoſe objects with which we are daily converſing, and to conſider lukewarmneſs and inſenſibility as a great and eſſential defect.

That

That the mind should be always in posses- SERM.
sion of itself, that is should be serene and III.
calm, and composed, is no doubt right, and, indeed, necessary; but all this is perfectly consistent with the lively exercise of the best affections, and with the greatest elevation of sentiment, consistent perfectly with our being filled with all the fullness of God. If our own hearts are not warmed by religious exercises, if the sacred fire, if I may speak so, be not kept alive in them, our religion will do us little good. We may maintain the form of it, but that is insignificant without the power; and with such a lifeless state, evil desires and bad practices will be found to be very consistent. But if our hearts are thoroughly affected, if the love of God and of Christ reign in them, if those truly great, and pure, and joyful sentiments which christianity inspireth, possess our souls, then shall all impure lusts be banished, then shall we know the kingdom of heaven within us, and the joys of that internal paradise as a sure pledge of our being admitted in due time into the blessed paradise above. We shall have pleasure in our devotions, in our religious meditations, in our acts of charity; and shall find ourselves growing in grace and increasing in all goodness.

SERM. III. And what have we ſo much to mind? To what ought we to apply our powers with ſo great diligence? What will be fruitful to us of ſo great advantages? What will yield us as ſolid and ſubſtantial joy? Let us then endeavour to raiſe the mind to, and keep it in ſuch a frame, as will be thus ſerviceable to us, effectually delivering us from every hateful luſt, and opening to us the ſprings of the pureſt delight.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

The tendency of the Chriſtian Religion to inſpire the mind with ſtrength and vigour in all ſeaſons of difficulty and diſtreſs; to preſerve it from what enfeebles its power; and to render it fit for all the ſervices of life.

2 TIM. I. 7.

For God hath not given us the ſpirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind.

THE Apoſtle *Paul*, who was *Timothy*'s Father in Chriſt, after having expreſſed his moſt affectionate remembrance of him, and full ſatisfaction in his ſincerity as a Chriſtian, exhorts him to vigour and diligence in acting the part to which he

SERM. IV. was called, and to ſtir up the gift of God miniſtered to him by this Apoſtle, that it might be uſeful to the beſt purpoſes; obſerving that ſuch diligence became the Chriſtian ſpirit, which has nothing in it of the ſlothful or indolent, of the mean or daſtardly, but is the ſpirit of power, of love, and of a ſound mind.

Theſe characters I propoſe in ſome diſcourſes to explain to you, and to give you a diſtinct view of the genius and ſpirit of Chriſtianity.

I begin with the firſt, in order, in the text; *God has not given us the ſpirit of fear, but of power.* The diſciples of Chriſt, in that age, laboured under great hardſhips, had many irreconcileable enemies, and were daily expoſed to grievous perſecution. They were conſtantly in hazard of their lives. In ſuch a ſtate of things, men who were fearful and pulſillanimous were ill qualified for the Chriſtian profeſſion, eſpecially, for being employed in the propagation of that religion. But we find, that *God did not give his ſervants the ſpirit of fear, but of power.* He endowed them with fortitude and reſolution. And it ſeems evidently to ſpeak a divine preſence with them, and divine influence, that ſuch numbers in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity were prepared to act ſo bold and undaunted a part,

and to ſuffer to the utmoſt with an unſhaken ſteadineſs and conſtancy in defence of it. Not here and there one, diſtinguiſhed by heroic courage and greatneſs of mind, for it was a common thing to ſuffer even to martyrdom, with a ſpirit which was ſo far from ſhrinking, that it ſhewed rather a readineſs for ſuffering; and this in tender age, and in the tender ſex, as well as in thoſe in whom a far greater meaſure of hardineſs and fortitude might be reaſonably expected. SERM. IV.

The ſpirit which reſted upon the diſciples of our Saviour, was indeed a ſpirit of power, in a peculiar ſenſe, that is, they were thereby enabled to work many great miracles, which evidently ſhewed that the power of the Higheſt was with them, and greatly contributed to the converſion of the world to the Chriſtian faith. But I do not imagine that thoſe extraordinary gifts are here meant: The author ſeems rather to ſpeak of the genius and ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and the temper of mind which it inſpires, as ſet in oppoſition to the ſpirit of fear, and in conjunction with that of love and of a ſound mind. Theſe are the endowments of Chriſtians in all ages. And in proportion as they have the true Chriſtian ſpirit, they will have power, as well as love, and a ſound mind.

SERM. IV. Now, to ſhew that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is a ſpirit of power, in other words, to ſhew that the genius of this religion is ſuch as tends to invigorate the mind, to make men firm, reſolute, and fit for action; it may be obſerved, that this religion has an admirable tendency, and is moſt happily contrived for delivering men from all thoſe things, which depreſs and enfeeble the mind, and enervate the active powers; ſuch are principally, a ſenſe and conſciouſneſs of great guilt, in intemperance, in ſenſual pleaſures and gratifications, and a melancholy inclination and caſt of temper.

Firſt, a ſenſe and conſciouſneſs of great guilt. *The wicked*, ſays the wiſe man, *flee when no man purſueth, but the righteous are bold as a Lion*. Prov. xxviii. 1. Where men are not hardened into an utter inſenſibility in all ſuch matters, which we ſee is ſometimes the caſe, there is nothing ſo confounding as a conſciouſneſs of great crimes. This fills the countenance with painful ſhame, and the heart with terror. And though in times of peace and ſafety, where men have no apprehenſions of danger, ſuch perſons may put on airs, as if they were above all dread of any evil, or of any power to inflict puniſhment, yet place them in circumſtances of hazard and alarm,

and

and it is ſeen that their hearts ſink within them; fearfulneſs and confuſion ſurprize, and make them dejected, and often deſperate. No wonder; for a conſcience which has been often and grievouſly injured, when it awakes to vengeance, as an exaſperated fury, who can bear it? Beſides that great guilt is, in its own nature, the ſource of painful remorſe, and great confuſion and diſquietude to the ſpirit, as well as of ſhame, and ſeeks to hide itſelf; beſides this, I ſay, few are gone ſo far in infidelity as to have loſt all ſenſe of God, as a moral Governour, who is diſpleaſed with ſin; and who will make his diſpleaſure very ſenſible to impenitent offenders in the dreadful effects of it. And when men begin to think that they are expoſed to his juſt indignation, that Omnipotence is armed againſt them, and that no one can ſay what puniſhment it may be fit for the Supreme Ruler to inflict, or of how long continuance it may be, to what ſanctuary can they fly from theſe dreadful apprehenſions? No wonder that terror ſhould poſſeſs their ſouls, and quite bereave them of reſolution and the uſe of their active powers. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* Heb. x. 31. This miſerable ſtate of vicious and corrupted hearts often diſcovers itſelf, in times of imminent danger, in moſt

SERM. IV.

Serm. frightful and pitiable forms, the natural
IV. appearances of woe and deſpair; what cries and lamentations are heard, what looks of anguiſh are ſeen? From ſuch a diſmal ſtate, Chriſtianity is an effectual preſervative. While men follow the dictates of it, they will do juſtice to their conſciences, they will be preſerved from preſumptuous ſin: They will enjoy the peace and tranquillity of ſoul, the open and unabaſhed countenance, the aſſured mind, the hope in God, which nothing but integrity can give. Free from confounding fear and alarm within them, they will have the full uſe of their rational active powers, and without being loſt to themſelves, may look danger, in its moſt threatening appearances, in the face. But if men have in time paſt been ſo unhappy as to be enſnared by vice, and guilty of preſumptuous ſin, yet if they are conſcious to themſelves of ingenuous repentance, and that the ſincerity of it has been made evident by an actual reformation of life, in this conſciouſneſs, according to the expreſs declarations of the goſpel, they have an aſſured pledge of forgiveneſs, and that their Maker is reconciled to them. This delivers them from painful apprehenſions and diſquietude of ſpirit, and miniſters peace which paſſeth all underſtanding. Now, that tranquillity

quillity of ſpirit which is the attendant of a conſciouſneſs of integrity, or a ſenſe of pardon, is neceſſary as the foundation of boldneſs and reſolution, it is neceſſary to the enjoyment of ourſelves, and the exerciſe of our active powers in the beſt manner. Chriſtianity gives us power as it gives us peace in our conſciences and hope in God.

Another thing which greatly enfeebles the active powers is intemperance in ſenſual pleaſures and gratifications. Men whoſe God is their belly, whoſe delight is in exceſs of wine, who give themſelves to luxury and the impurities of the fleſh, are ill prepared for any ſervices in which a vigorous and hardy reſolution, a patience of labour and fatigue, boldneſs and activity are required. Voluptuouſneſs begets a vicious ſoftneſs and delicacy which flies from all hardſhip and danger: It enervates the ſpirit and all the active powers, and makes men in a great degree incapable of any thing brave or heroic. What an eaſy prey did the *Aſiatic* luxury make hundreds of thouſands, which might be called a vaſt multitude, indeed, but not an army, to a few hardy *European* veterans inured to military diſcipline, to labour, and toil, and abſtinence? And it is judiciouſly obſerved, by the writers of that time, that the *Carthaginian* army ſuffered much more by the ſoft delights of *Capua*, than by all the horrors

Serm. IV.

horrors of the *Alpine* mountains, and the want and fatigue ſuſtained upon them. But do we not ſee a thouſand inſtances of the ſame kind in private life? Luxury and licentious pleaſure do not only ſpoil the taſte for the nobleſt exerciſes and purſuits, but enervate the active powers, ſink men into a moſt ignoble and diſhonourable indolence, and make every thing attended with much labour and difficulty too hard for them. And there is nothing more common than to ſee, in all the pomp of luxury, a poor, ſlothful, and inſignificant ſpirit. In truth, the voluptuous character cannot be ſet in a light too contemptible. Of all purſuits, that of pleaſure, as the chief good, is the moſt to be deſpiſed. A ſenſe of guilt in the pleaſures which are ſinful, and conſcience not yet quite ſubdued, may perhaps give great diſturbance to men in their vicious courſes; ſomething within them whiſpers that they are doing wrong. and that the end of theſe things muſt be bitter as wormwood; but all virtuous reſolution, all the reſiſting power being loſt, theſe men, as *Solomon* ſpeaks, ſuffer themſelves to be dragged by luſt and appetite *as an ox to the ſlaughter, and the fool to the correction of the ſtocks.* Perhaps affairs of importance to themſelves or their friends demand their attention, and are of ſuch a kind, that an opportunity loſt may not be eaſily, or ever recovered, whilſt

whilſt there is another demand to be firſt ſatis- Serm.
fied, to which the impotent mind tamely IV.
ſubmits. The cauſe of our country, the cauſe of truth and virtue, may need a reſolved and vigorous appearance in their behalf; but it is not to be expected; for the generous diſpoſitions, the hardy valour of ſoul which are wanted upon ſuch occaſions, are loſt in ſloth and luxury, which yet muſt be indulged, whatever be the conſequence. Some inſtances of this kind we know there have been, which have rendered the characters for ever infamous.

But what an effectual preſervative from ſuch a mean ſtate, is the Chriſtian Spirit. The religion of Chriſt enjoins the ſtricteſt temperance; and forbids all exceſs in ſenſual pleaſure and gratification; and the Apoſtle *Paul* has given us a noble and moſt ſignificant illuſtration of this in his own caſe, 1 *Cor.* ix. 26. When he had recommended to them a virtuous ſelf government, and ſet before them the reſolved abſtinence and temperance of thoſe, who ſtrove for the prize in the public games, as an example; obſerving, that if they ſubmitted to this for a corruptible crown, much more ought the diſciples of Chriſt to ſubmit to it, that they might gain a crown which is incorruptible; he ſets before them likewiſe his own conduct, *I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubiection; leſt that by any means, when*

I have preached to others, I myſelf ſhould be a [illegible] *caſt away.* I am ſenſible, as if he had ſaid, of great danger from enflamed deſires and appetites. I ſet myſelf to bear them down with moſt obſtinate reſolution. The word in the original is very ſignificant, expreſſing his readineſs to uſe any ſeverity of diſcipline, which was neceſſary to anſwer this great end; and that his body, and the appetites of it, ſhould be always by him held in the place of a ſlave. And, indeed, this is eſſential to a truly virtuous character. It is true, indeed, that many perſons from a ſuperſtitious zeal, and as if ſuch things were a pleaſing ſacrifice to God, have affected not only great auſterity of life, but many very painful mortifications, and ſome of them ſo much out of nature, that one would wonder how they ſhould enter into their imaginations. In the early ages of Chriſtianity the paſſion for a monaſtic life ran ſo high, and even for the ſeverities of it, that the religion of Chriſt, to men who did not underſtand it, but took their ideas of it from ſuch perſons, muſt appear extremely ridiculous. But, after all, it is certain, that a hardy temperance is eſſential to a virtuous character, and no man will ever be able to approve himſelf as a man of worth, who cannot reſtrain the natural appetites, and keep them in ſubjection to reaſon and conſcience. It

was

was one great deſign of this philoſophy of the [illegible] antient moraliſts to effect this by its precepts [illegible] and diſcipline. They thought that all virtue was comprehended under two heads, namely, patience and abſtinence; bearing evil and calamity in a proper manner, and abſtaining from irregular pleaſures and gratifications. It is hard to ſay which of theſe is of the greateſt importance; but it is evident they are both neceſſary. However, what I am to obſerve is principally this, that the religion of Chriſt, by forbidding all exceſs in ſenſual pleaſure, and enjoining the ſtricteſt temperance, tends moſt happily to preſerve the vigour of the ſoul, and all the active powers, in a ſtate fit for the ſervices of human life. And the truth is, where the ſpirit of Chriſtianity prevails, there will be ſuch a taſte for the refined pleaſures of virtue, as will thoroughly engage the ſpirit, and make men in a great meaſure indifferent to ſenſual delights. *The joy of the Holy Ghoſt* is infinitely more ſatisfying than theſe, and when men's hearts are full of heavenly deſire, and full of God, the animal appetites will have little power over them.

The laſt thing I mentioned, as what enfeebles the mind and enervates the active powers, is a melancholy inclination and caſt of temper. How woeful the effects of this,

Serm. IV. this, we ſee in many inſtances. A horrid gloom overſpreads the mind. Every thing is ſeen in a dark and diſagreeable light. All the real evils of life, and diſadvantages of our preſent ſtate are aggravated, and many grievances added to them, which have no exiſtence but in a melancholy imagination. Men under the power of this diſorder become apprehenſive and fearful, diſſatisfied and uneaſy in every circumſtance. Imagination itſelf could not contrive a ſtate which would make them happy. Inward diſcontent ſours all the enjoyments of life, and nothing pleaſes. There is neither heart nor hand for the ſervices of life. And men may be ſaid rather to bear exiſtence about them as a burthen, than to enjoy it; and are very unfit for the offices of it. Indeed the wretchedneſs of this ſtate is ſometimes ſuch as to be beyond all deſcription; and we ſee it not unfrequently, begets ſuch an impatience of life, that men do violence to it, and, by an unnatural crime, put an end to it.

It is very certain, that this diſorder does ſometimes ſo far prevail, that no reaſoning from the cleareſt and moſt evident principles is of any ſervice. The rational powers, as well as the active, ſeem to be quite benumbed; and while the mind is racked with pain, yet it diſcovers a diſreliſh of any objects but what

what give pain, and a kind of reluctancy against all diverſion from the melancholy gloom. But certainly ſo far as principles of reaſon and juſt ſentiments can prevail to give relief, the religion of Chriſt is contrived to do it. To the believing and ſelf approved mind it ſets every thing in the moſt deſirable light. It alleviates the grievances and ſorrows of life, making men capable of conſidering them as real advantages, by becoming the means of attaining to ſuperior degrees of happineſs. It preſents the Supreme Being to the mind, as with irreſiſtible ſway, governing all things in the beſt manner, and moſt to the gain of his faithful ſervants. It ſhews a ſpeedy end of evil and ſuffering, which is to be ſucceeded by eternal life. Theſe principles, if any principles can effect it, will make the mind chearful and eaſy. And when by a divine illumination, men are prepared for right judgment, and can diſcern and feel according to truth, they will find the ſpirit raiſed above all diſtreſs, and painful apprehenſion; and living by faith, will enjoy life with ſatisfaction; ſo that they will have poſſeſſion of themſelves, and be capable of applying the active powers with chearfulneſs to the true purpoſes of life and religion.

SERM. IV.

This leads me to the next thing I would inſiſt upon for the illuſtration of this argument,

SERM. IV. [illegible]

ment, viz. That as the genius and spirit of true Christianity is a most effectual preservative from all things that enfeeble the mind, and debilitate the active powers, so it has an admirable tendency to minister strength and vigour to the soul, and prepares men for acting the part assigned to them with advantage and success.

For in the first place, it presents to the thoughts such a view of human life, as pleases and is most encouraging to the reflecting mind, and fills it with sentiments which are large and generous. With respect to life itself, it sets it in a pleasing light, as only the infancy of existence, and an introduction to a nobler state, the duration of which is to have no period: And forbids us to form our judgment of existence only from our present circumstances, directing our thoughts to eternity, in which our state may be greatly advanced not only by our present labours, but even by those sufferings of life which are to flesh and blood so grievous. In this view, human life must be considered as an invaluable blessing; and once a man can stedfastly judge it so, he will be prepared with vigour and delight to perform the offices of it. Christianity also fills the mind with most generous sentiments of the relation in which we stand to God and the Redeemer, and the vast intellectual

tellectual family. In this relation there is a pleaſing dignity. Is it not honourable to be acknowledged as the *offspring of God; as heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt*? To be members of that glorious family in which God the great Father will for ever dwell, diſtributing the rich gifts of his grace to the individuals according to their capacities, and rejoicing in their happineſs. Have not all the members of it in common ſuch honourable and valuable priviledges, that in compariſon, the little diſtinctions among them which are of a temporal kind, ſink to nothing in the imagination, and appear ſcarce worthy of notice? In a word, a ſincere diſciple of Chriſt muſt find the greateſt reaſon to be pleaſed with his Creator, and to exult in exiſtence; and when the mind is in ſuch a ſtate, it muſt be all life and vigour in the ſervices to which we are called. We read in ſcripture *that the joy of the Lord is the ſtrength of his ſervants*. Neh. viii. 10. And it is a very juſt way of ſpeaking; for, as nothing can more proſtrate the active powers than deep ſorrow and grief, ſo nothing gives more life and energy than gladneſs of heart. And the Apoſtle *Paul* ſpeaks in a way very ſuitable to, and worthy of the genius of Chriſtianity, when he exhorts us *to rejoice evermore*. We can indeed wiſh for nothing more

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. to make our ſtate joyful, and our hearts glad, than what the Chriſtian ſcheme preſents to a believing mind; ſo that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity may be juſtly termed the ſpirit of power.

Secondly, The religion of Chriſt will never engage us in any cauſe, or ſervice, or courſe of action, but what is worthy of us, and in which it is fit for us to exert our powers. What we do in obedience to Chriſt our leader, if we have a right underſtanding of his precepts, reaſon and conſcience will approve. We ſhall have no inward checks, none of the confuſion of an accuſing or ſelf-condemning heart, nor any of the diſtracting fears and uneaſineſſes which this brings forth. On the contrary, we ſhall find ourſelves engaged, not only in a courſe of actions which are free from blame, but which are worthy and important; and in a cauſe the moſt honourable and excellent of all others, the cauſe of truth and virtue, the only cauſe of God. And the ſcriptures do the greateſt honour to the ſervants of Chriſt, while it repreſents them as *workers together with him*, and even, *with God*. Now, is it not natural, that a generous mind ſhould be inflamed with zeal when acting in a cauſe the moſt worthy and honourable? and be prepared to exert all its powers and vigour? Not declining any

labour, or ſhrinking from any hardſhip or Serm.
ſuffering, which men may be called to in IV.
defence of it? Will not a cauſe moſt important and honourable give ſpirit and fire, if you will pardon the expreſſion, to the patrons and defenders of it? What great things have brave men done in defence of their country? In ſome inſtances, even exceeding what could well be expected from human nature, exceeding themſelves. But ſurely the love of God, and of mankind, and of truth and virtue, are principles ſtill more generous and noble, than the love of our country; and is it not to be expected then, that in acting upon theſe, men ſhould act with the greateſt ſpirit and vigour? Does not experience juſtify theſe expectations, in the illuſtrious train of confeſſors, and martyrs, which are found in the records of the Chriſtian Church? Men who triumphed over their enemies, by their patience under all poſſible cruelty; and made it evident that they might be ſlaughtered, but could not be conquered. Such the magnanimity and courage which the cauſe of Chriſtianity, ſo honourable and ſo important, inſpires! And how well does it become the followers of Jeſus to imitate the glorious pattern he ſet them, in his own conduct, who endured the croſs and deſpiſed the ſhame, who with perfect meekneſs and reſignation of ſpirit ſubmitted

SERM. IV. to all which the power and malice of his enemies could lay upon him, and thus has ſhewed us how to overcome the world?

Thirdly, it greatly animates the ſpirit of a Chriſtian to know, that, in doing his duty, he has God upon his ſide. To have his approbation is a moſt deſirable thing, and the higheſt honour. This will effectually ſupport men in well-doing, againſt all the reproaches and injurious cenſures of the unthinking or prejudiced. But it is not only the approbation of their principles and conduct which Chriſtians are to expect. For we know that the Creator acts the part of a moral governour. And that as thoſe who do good, are pleaſing to him, ſo he will certainly eſpouſe their cauſe. He will undoubtedly right their wrongs, and reward them good for the evil they may have endured in the cauſe of truth and virtue. He will record all the ſervices they have done with ſincerity, all their good actions; not one of them, the moſt inſignificant to appearance, ſhall be forgotten; for if any man gives to a diſciple of Chriſt a cup of cold water in the name of a diſciple, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his reward. The faith of this, and a fixed perſuaſion that God as our moral governour is ever preſent with us, obſerves our conduct, will be pleaſed with our good actions,

tions, and reward them in a way worthy of his bounty and goodneſs, gives great ſpirit and life in doing the will of God, even in circumſtances of the greateſt difficulty and hardſhip. When men turn their thoughts to the preſent Divinity, all theſe things in a great meaſure vaniſh, and it is indeed ſhameful to complain of them. SERM. IV.

Eſpecially, when it is conſidered, that from divine power we confidently expect all neceſſary aſſiſtance to the performance of our duty, and acting our part well in every circumſtance. God has never forſaken them *who put their truſt in him.* He can, and he will ſtrengthen his ſervants, *by his holy ſpirit, with might in the inner man. He will make them conquerors and more than conquerors. His grace ſhall be ſufficient for them, and his ſtrength will be made perfect in weakneſs.* And the Apoſtle *Paul* expreſſes himſelf in a manner very honourable to his great Maſter, and worthy of himſelf, Phil. iv. 13. *I can do all things thro' Chriſt ſtrengthening me.* No man has any reaſon from nature and ſound philoſophy, to imagine that God will not give real aſſiſtance to thoſe, who in circumſtances of difficulty and diſtreſs ſeek him; aſſiſtance ſo effectual, as to be worthy of ſuch ſtrong repreſentations. And men who have beſt known religion have been moſt ſenſible of it.

Sect. IV. That he will be preſent with the good, and help them, is an article of natural religion, as well as of Chriſtianity; and ſurely a man will be prepared to engage in any ſervice, even the moſt difficult, with reſolution and ſpirit, when he knows that there is a power on his ſide for which nothing is too hard. And the powers of nature will be exerted in the beſt manner, when men believe that the God of nature is with them.

This aſſures the mind of happy ſucceſs. Which is the laſt thing I ſhall mention for illuſtration of this argument.

Deſpair of ſucceſs in any adventure chills all the active powers, and makes men feeble, ſo that they become incapable of doing, even what otherwiſe they might do with eaſe. If in that hopeleſs ſtate of the mind they are forced upon action, it is without life and vigour, and with a certain unconcern and negligence, which do not a little contribute to that want of ſucceſs, the proſpect of which is the cauſe of deſpondency. It is true, indeed, in ſome particular caſes, deſpair has been ſaid to give men courage, as in the field of battle, where it is very natural that if men ſee no hope of eſcaping with life, they ſhould make the purchaſe of victory as dear to the enemy as they can. Though it hath been often obſerved, by the wiſeſt men, that this

this reſolution, which ariſes from deſpair, is no way equal to that which aſſurance of ſucceſs and confidence of victory give men. But then how many are the caſes of difficulty and danger, in which this kind of deſperate courage has no room for exerciſe; and where men can have no ſuch conſideration as the ſelling of their lives at the deareſt rate, to give them ſpirit? How liſtleſs, then, and as to action, how indifferent muſt they be; not caring whether they do or not do, or what they do! Very different, ſurely, is this ſtate of the mind, from that in which we have good aſſurance of ſucceſs in our endeavours; and that if we are diligent in doing what is certainly in our power to do, the iſſue ſhall be perfectly to our ſatisfaction. This gives great life in action, and makes it pleaſure to exert our power to the utmoſt. Thus aſſurance of ſucceſs does indeed prove a moſt powerful means of gaining it. SERM. IV.

Chriſtianity enſures ſucceſs to all its true votaries with reſpect to the great ends of human life. In many particular deſigns and attempts they may meet with diſappointment in their hopes and expectations, but with reſpect to the great thing which they purſue, they are perfectly ſafe. They are contributing what they can, *as workers together with God*, in carrying his great deſigns into exe-

SERM. IV.

execution. And they know his deſigns will be carried into execution, though in many things, which ſhort-ſighted mortals look upon as promiſing ſteps, the ſucceſs ſhould not be anſwerable. The grand deſign cannot fail. Nor can the great thing, which every individual has to purſue for himſelf, that is, his own ſalvation, fail of accompliſhment, if purſued with ſincerity and perſevering diligence. So that the utmoſt proviſion is made in the goſpel for aſſuring our hopes, and giving us joyful vigour in acting our part.

If we lay theſe things together, it will fully appear, that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is a ſpirit of power. For it is an effectual preſervative from thoſe things which enfeeble the mind, and enervate its faculties, ſuch, principally, as conſciouſneſs of great guilt, luxury, and a voluptuous courſe of life, melancholy, diſcontent, and fearful apprehenſion. And, on the other hand, it miniſters life and vigour to the ſoul, as it makes men pleaſed with exiſtence and their ſtation in it, as it puts us upon no deſigns or attempts but what are worthy of us, and honourable to us, as it animates us with the faith of a preſent Divinity upon our ſide, who is our omnipotent helper, and, finally, as it aſſures our hearts of ſucceſs with reſpect to the great ends of life.

But

But the power and influences of the Chriſtian ſpirit are far better known by being felt than deſcribed. When it has overcome the ſpirit of the world in men, when it has ſubdued impetuous paſſions, when it has born them up under great difficulties, and given them peace and tranquillity in the face of danger, when it has diffuſed a ſerene joy through the ſoul in days of darkneſs and diſtreſs, and preſerved delight in God and his adminiſtration, and delight in exiſtence, even in the moſt diſaſtrous occurrences, then it will appear what it really is, and how glorious the power of it. And that it has produced ſuch effects as theſe, many have known from their own experience. And if we cultivate that ſpirit as we ought to do, we may ſtill expect ſuch effects. Indeed, if Chriſtianity be no more to us than a matter of pleaſing ſpeculation, we ſhall know nothing of them; but if *this wiſdom which is from above*, enters into the heart, and we come to embrace the principles of it ſo as to act upon them, or, in the words of the Prophet, *if we follow on to know the Lord*, we ſhall know *that his out-goings are prepared as the morning*; we ſhall feel the energy of that ſpirit which is the ſpirit of light and life, and which has ſuch power, that men have done, and ſtill will do under the influences of it, for

Serm. IV. for the ſake of God, and of truth, and virtue, what no other principle would have animated them to do.

Of ſuch a ſpirit Chriſtians ſtill have need. The ſcriptural repreſentations of the preſent ſtate, juſtified by experience, fully ſhew this. The reſiſting of the various temptations to ſin to which we are expoſed, the bearing down boiſterous and unruly paſſions, getting the better of bad habits which may have been contracted, the bearing of evil, in an unſpeakable variety of forms, which may be appointed in our lot, and from which no man can expect to be quite free, are things, which, it muſt be confeſſed, have difficulty in them, and require patience of labour, reſolution, and firmneſs of ſpirit. And though in the peaceful days in which our lot has fallen, we do not ſuffer by the cruelty of perſecuting hands, yet we have enough to try the ſtrength of our ſpirits. Let us endeavour therefore to make the beſt improvement of Chriſtianity to the purpoſe of ſtrengthening and confirming ourſelves. Let us lay aſide ſloth that we may follow thoſe who have gone before us. Let us arm ourſelves with *the ſame mind* which was in them, *and let patience have its perfect work in us, that we may be perfect and intire wanting nothing.*

SERMON

SERMON V.

The tendency of Chriſtianity to ſuppreſs and root out all thoſe diſpoſitions which contract the ſpirit, and cramp the good affections; to excite and ſtrengthen love to one another, and to engage to all the offices of benevolence.

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2 TIM. I. 7.

For God hath not given us the ſpirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind.

THE tendency of the Chriſtian ſpirit to the exerciſe and ſtrengthening of good and kind affection, is the ſubject which now lies before us.

Every man who attends to the workings of his own heart, muſt be ſenſible that there are

SERM. V. are two grand principles, to which all other inſtincts and affections are to be ſubmitted, namely, ſelf-love and benevolence. No man will doubt that ſelf-love is a moſt powerful, as it is certainly a natural principle of action. But we are directed in the holy ſcriptures *to love our neighbours as ourſelves*; and this is likewiſe the law of our nature. The meaning of which is, that as we are naturally diſpoſed and determined to the love of ourſelves, to deſire and purſue what may make us happy, as an ultimate end, in which the private affection reſts; ſo we are to love our neighbour, to bear a real diſintereſted affection and good-will to him; and when it is in our power, to do him good and contribute to his happineſs, as the ultimate end and proper object of the benevolent affection, in which it reſts. To contend that there is no ſuch diſintereſted good-will in nature, is indeed caſting a moſt infamous reproach upon it; and there is no ingenuous and worthy mind, but muſt be ſenſible that it is utterly falſe; and in reality good-will is not only a principle in our nature, but it is, in its beſt ſtate, the ſtrongeſt of all principles. Men cannot be juſtified of their own hearts, and approved by their reflecting thoughts, if they do not, when called to it, give up all private intereſt to the public good. And as there

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are many inſtances in which this has been done, ſo we cannot but greatly admire the characters diſtinguiſhed by ſuch generoſity and public ſpirit, and heartily approve their conduct. SERM. V.

It was not, it could not be the deſign of the religion of Chriſt, to give us any principles or affections, which were not originally planted by the Creator in human nature. For to do this would not be to perfect our nature, but indeed, ſtrictly ſpeaking, to make a new one. The deſign of that religion is to recover men from the power and influence of bad principle, from depravity and corruption; and to make nature that excellent thing it was originally intended to be. And as love and good-will are confeſſedly the moſt excellent affections, ſo Chriſtianity is in a peculiar manner adapted to ſtrengthen them: The diſciples of Chriſt have received the ſpirit of Love.

Whatever we ſee amiable in any character, is the object of love; and the good-will, which neceſſarily attends it, diſpoſes the mind to all the good offices we are capable of performing. There is one character to which we owe the greateſt love and higheſt veneration, as being the moſt excellent and amiable, who is quite above need, or poſſibility of receiving advantage by any kind offices of ours. *He is not worſhipped by the hands of men as though he needed*

SERM. V. *needed any thing, ſeeing he giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things*; Acts xvii. 25. As the original cauſe of all, himſelf abſolutely independent, he communicates to all, he receiveth from none. No man who has got the idea of ſuch a being into his mind, but muſt confeſs that God is to be loved above all, as having in him every thing excellent and lovely; and this ſacred paſſion, if it be fit to call it a paſſion, is properly expreſſed in delightful contemplations of his high perfections, and joy in his complete bleſſedneſs; in a conſtant diſpoſition to pleaſe him, by doing his will; and in a hearty and zealous concurrence with his glorious deſigns, ſo far as we are capable of being the inſtruments of carrying them into execution, attended with an abhorrence and ſtudious avoiding of every thing that may be diſpleaſing to him. Thus *to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, ſoul, and ſtrength, is the firſt and great commandment.*

But our fellow creatures are the objects of our love in another ſenſe; they are the objects of our beneficence. We are placed in circumſtances in which we may contribute greatly to their happineſs by our good offices, and theſe, where we have any opportunity of performing them, are the only ſubſtantial evidence of the ſincerity of our love. Nothing certainly

certainly can be more abſurd than the profeſ- SERM.
ſion of love to our neighbour, when yet we V.
will do him no good, though it is in the power
of our hand.

Love, in my text, may be taken in the largeſt ſenſe, as comprehending both the love of God and our neighbour. Theſe are indeed inſeparably connected. The love of God muſt be attended with a ſpirit of love to our neighbours; and whoſoever *ſaith that he loveth God and hateth his brother is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?* 1 John iv. 20. But if *we love one another, we are born of God, and know him, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

It is plain that the religion of Chriſt above all things tends to beget and increaſe the love of God in us; as it ſets the divine perfections and counſels in the moſt amiable light, and contains expreſſions of his goodneſs to mankind, moſt aſtoniſhing, and far beyond any thing elſe we ſee in the works of his hands; in *this was love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his ſon to be a propitiation for our ſins,* 1 John iv. 10. *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* John iii. 16.

But

SERM. V. But as love, when ſpoken of in general, does uſually in the holy ſcriptures ſignify charity to our fellow creatures, which is the end of the commandment, ſo I ſhall in this diſcourſe principally treat of that, and ſhew that the genius of Chriſtianity is indeed a ſpirit of love. And I ſhall purſue the ſame method obſerved in my laſt diſcourſe, namely, I ſhall firſt ſhew that Chriſtianity tends to ſuppreſs all thoſe irregular and bad diſpoſitions which contract the ſpirit, and cramp the good affections; ſecondly, that it tends greatly to ſtrengthen theſe, and to encourage the exerciſe of them.

Firſt, it tends to ſuppreſs all thoſe irregular and bad diſpoſitions which contract the ſpirit, and cramp the good affections; and theſe may be ſummed up under two heads, viz. the ſelfiſh ſpirit of this world, and a peeviſh diſſatisfaction of mind with our ſtate.

The firſt of theſe, namely, the ſelfiſh ſpirit of this world, ſtands in direct oppoſition to charity; as the one prevails the other muſt give way. He that thinks and acts as if he were made only for himſelf; as if he were alone in the midſt of the earth; as if he were to take care of nothing but his own intereſt, and regard his neighbours no otherwiſe than as they may be the means of promoting it; who thus acts as if he had no principle but ſelf-

self-love in him, and therefore as to his moral Sect. frame is really monstrous, (to which unhappy V. state of mind some men by a long indulgence of the selfish affections seem to have brought themselves) such an one, I say, must be an utter stranger, as to true charity, so to the Christian spirit. And this infamous selfishness is the original rise of other dispositions, which all men will acknowledge to be hateful and abominable; particularly, of envy at the prosperity of our neighbour; of a fixed malice and implacable resentment against those who have injured us, or are supposed to have done so; which are dispositions perfectly diabolical, and where they are suffered to prevail, prevail upon the ruins of all good affection. The man who can indulge malice, revenge, and envy, and take pleasure in them, is utterly unfit for the offices of Charity, for he has nothing of the spirit of it.

But what is it which this selfish spirit, or spirit of the world, contends so eagerly for? Not the noblest and most valuable attainments; not moral perfection; the favour of God, or immortality; no. The object of it is always something of a temporal or worldly nature; some distinctions, which makes a great figure on this scene, but which sound wisdom looks upon as insignificant, something to which the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, or the

SERM. pride of life points to. Theſe are the things
V. it purſues, theſe the things it would engroſs.

Now, Chriſtianity ſtrikes at the very root of this temper. The diſciples of Chriſt are not of this world, even as their Saviour was not of it. It is an expreſs preliminary in his covenant, that they ſhould be ready, at his call, to give up all their temporal intereſts; content with the proſpect of a glorious reward hereafter, of *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for them who are kept by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation.* 1 Peter i. 3. Of this inheritance we have the higheſt notions given us in the holy ſcriptures; and from what we know of the nature of things, we have reaſon to believe they are juſt. For a ſtate of perfect innocence, of the uninterrupted exerciſe of the good affections, of perfect tranquillity of ſpirit, the fulleſt fruition of the higheſt ſocial delight, above all, the moſt ſatisfying enjoyment of God, is ſurely the nobleſt ſtate which can enter into the imagination. But then this is of a nature quite different from ſenſual and temporal enjoyments; and it requires a quite different temper and taſte to make men capable of chooſing and purſuing it, or of being happy in it. A taſte directly the reverſe of the carnal and worldly ſpirit. For where this taſte once obtains, and

men

men have learned to walk by faith and not by sight, there must be an indifference to the things of this world; so far, I mean, an indifference, that they shall appear as nothing when compared to the hopes of a christian. When the mind is raised above those things which are the mammon, the deity of a selfish spirit, that spirit loses all its strength, and gives way to the worthy and generous dispositions. Pity, indeed it is, great pity, that so many who profess the religion of Christ, and cannot in the judgment of Charity be pronounced insincere, should be so much, as they evidently are, under the power of carnal affections, and therefore of the selfish spirit. But then this shews that they are far from being perfect Christians; and that they have still a greater mixture of the genius of this world; whereas it does not at all shew, that the principles and spirit of Christianity have not a tendency to suppress that, which, it evidently appears, they have. However, it will always be found to be fact, that when men have placed *their affections on things which are above, and not on the things of this world*, the selfish spirit, which contends principally, or only for the things of this world, will lose it's main strength. SERM. V.

The light, again, in which Christianity places men, as constantly under the imme-

SERM. diate inſpection and tuition of the ſupreme
V. Arbiter of all; as related to a great family,
and parts of a great whole, which is, and ever will be under his care; and who will ſhare in the greateſt good provided for that family, ſo far as the capacity of the individual and the general good of the whole admit; theſe principles, I ſay, which though nature indeed teaches, yet are more clearly and fully ſet before us in the religion of Chriſt, all tend to the ſuppreſſion of the ſelfiſh ſpirit. But you will eaſily enlarge upon theſe hints in your own thoughts.

The other great enemy to charity and the good affections, is, a peeviſh diſſatisfaction with our ſtate. Let men, for the illuſtration of this, look into their own hearts. They will certainly find, that when things go proſperouſly with them, when they are pleaſed with their ſtate, and their hearts are glad, then their minds are the moſt open to the applications, and their hands to the exigencies of their neighbours. Good humour is a wonderful preparation for the exerciſe of the good affections, and for the doing of kind offices. And for this reaſon, it is no ſmall art in ſuch as are in a dependent ſtate, and who have favours to aſk, to find out thoſe ſeaſons for addreſſing their ſuperiors when their minds are in the greateſt tranquillity,

lity, when they are in what is called a good humour or temper. Whereas, when the mind is in an oppoſite ſtate, when a peeviſh ſullenneſs or diſſatisfaction and diſcontent prevail, there is little good to be expected. Theſe ſhut up the heart; and men poring on their own unhappineſs, have no diſpoſition to liſten to the complaints of others, or to labour for their relief. Where this temper is habitual, it really eats like a canker. To be almoſt conſtantly out of humour, which is the ſtate of ſome unhappy mortals, deſtroys every thing excellent, and more particularly the generous and good affections, which can never thrive in ſuch a ſoil, for they require an eaſy and frank, an open and ingenuous ſpirit. He that is pleaſed with himſelf and his ſtate, pleaſed with his Maker and the adminiſtration of all things around him, who rejoices in tranquillity and ſatisfaction of ſpirit; he it is, who will have the kind heart, and the open hand. He has room in his mind, and attention for the intereſts of others; and is prepared to ſympathize in their ſorrows, and to ſhare their joys. Now, SERM. V.

How admirably is the religion of Chriſt calculated for begetting this joyful calm and tranquillity of ſpirit, that ſtable ſatisfaction with the ſtate in which we are placed? It preſents to us the moſt ſurpriſing and ſatiſ-

SERM. V. fying expreſſions of the love of him who made, and who redeemed us; it ſhews us that the preſence of the univerſal Sovereign is ever with us; that the whole world, and every individual is under his notice; that we want no more to enſure the greateſt happineſs to us, but that we be the objects of his favour; that ſincere repentance of our paſt ſins, and a ſtudious endeavour to do his will, and to pleaſe him for the future, will certainly make us ſo; that in this caſe, every circumſtance, every event in our preſent ſtate, ſhall contribute to our advantage; and that the preſent ſcene ſhall iſſue in a happy immortality. Surely, if theſe principles are received with a ſteady aſſent, as what may be depended on, they will make the mind eaſy and the heart glad. All ſourneſs of temper, all ſullen diſſatisfaction will flee before them. Eſpecially when the mind (under the light of God's countenance, and the influence of that good ſpirit who is the comforter of Chriſtians, and by whom joy is diffuſed into their ſouls) feels all the power of theſe ſacred principles; in other words, when the God of hope fills men with all joy and peace in believing, then all gloom will be diſpelled; the mind will taſte a perfect ſatisfaction; and then the good affections will be exerted in the beſt manner.

This

This leads to the ſecond head, namely, Sect. that Chriſtianity greatly encourages all the V. good affections, and tends to ſtrengthen and confirm them. It is not indeed a ſmall matter, that the Chriſtian ſpirit ſo effectually bears down the worldly and ſelfiſh, which ſtandeth in oppoſition to charity: for when this bad ſpirit is caſt out, and has no more power over the ſoul, then the genuine affections of nature will have opportunity of exerting themſelves, and will put men upon all good offices to one another. It has been already obſerved, that the benevolent and kind affections are far from being weak in our original conſtitution, they are in truth deſigned to be the ſtrongeſt; and when every thing which perverted that conſtitution, and hurts the original frame, is removed, then nature will appear like itſelf, the very image of God in love and goodneſs.

But the ſtriking ſo directly at the worldly ſelfiſh ſpirit, and ſetting nature free from the entanglements of bondage to it, is not all; the religion of Chriſt has alſo provided greatly for the encouragement of good and worthy diſpoſitions, and for ſtrengthening charity in us.

Charity is the great thing recommended by our Saviour, and bound upon us by the laws of the goſpel. It appears in the New

SERM. Teſtament, in reality to be what the Apoſtle
V. *Paul* has called it, *the end of the command-*
ment. We are aſſured by that ſame author, that if we have not charity, whatever elſe we have to boaſt of in the way of attainments by our own diligence and improvements, or by miraculous gifts conferred upon us, *ſo that we could ſpeak in every tongue, had all knowledge, and underſtood all myſteries, had all faith, ſo that we could remove mountains*; yet *ſtill we are nothing*; that is, we are nothing to the true purpoſes of Chriſtianity and ſalvation. Our Saviour has inſiſted upon nothing ſo much as Charity; which he carries to the higheſt perfection; teaches us not only to love our friends, but even our enemies, and to return them good offices for their injuries and wrongs, that ſo *we may be perfect, and like our heavenly Father, who cauſes his ſun to ſhine on the righteous and the wicked, and ſends rain on the juſt and unjuſt*. He inſiſts upon charity as the diſtinguiſhing character of his diſciples, and as their glory. With recommending this to them he ſets out; and at laſt, when he was about to leave them, very much inſiſts upon it; impreſſing it upon their minds by a very ſignificant repreſentation of his own ſpirit, in waſhing their feet, a thing they could never forget, and which ſhewed the tenderneſs and readineſs to do all kind offices,

fices, which they ought to express to one another. And indeed, if any man is a stranger to the spirit of Christ, a stranger to charity, he is none of his. Every man then, who is desirous to satisfy the obligations he is under as a disciple of Christ, must with the most studious care suppress all envy, hatred, and malice, and cultivate love and good affections; love, not confined to any relation, any sect, party, or denomination, but to all men. This is an effectual method of assuring our hearts before God, and the sure way of pleasing him.

Further, in the Gospel we have the fairest and most lovely patterns of Goodness set before us. The Apostle *Paul* teaches us to be *followers of God as dear children, and to walk in love.* Eph. v. 1. Intimating that in this the imitation and likeness of God consists. That we are made capable of an imitation of God, is a thought that wonderfully strikes the mind, and tends to give the utmost vigour to our desires of excelling in that, in which we become like him; which must undoubtedly be the most excellent of all things. Poor indeed are our highest attainments in this respect, and unworthy of being named when compared to divine perfection: but yet, as we have a clear perception of what it is to be benevolent and good, and

indeed

have indeed here the clearest idea of benevolence in God, that we have of any of his perfections, so in the exercise of goodness, we do really resemble him. And to be like him must ever be accounted our highest glory. We see the goodness of God in the works of nature, and common providence; we see it in our own frame, and in all things around us. But there is something in the gospel, which sets it in a light the most affecting which can be imagined. His grace and mercy to mankind are seen in the gift of his only begotten son for our salvation; *He so loved the world, that he spared not that* divine person, *but gave him up to the death for us all.* How much must the Father be supposed to love him! Yet he gave that command, in submission to which the Son of his love humbled himself into the form and fashion of a man, and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross. If we really believe the scriptural representations of this matter, nothing can possibly have an equal effect upon the human heart: And it is in vain to attempt to illustrate it; for the thing does so strike the imagination at once, that illustrations do but weaken it. But while we turn our thoughts to it with seriousness and attention, must it not have a wondrous effect in enlarging the heart, and in giving a force

force and spring to the good affections? The Apostle *Paul* speaks with great propriety and justness upon this subject. 2 Cor. iii. 18. *But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.* We see the glory of God in the clearest mirror, namely, the glory of his goodness and love, in the gospel scheme; and this view has a transforming power; it changes men into the image and likeness of God; it makes them good. Such an example of love and good-will, does in it's own nature tend greatly to please and open the heart of him who seriously attends to it; but when men consider themselves as the objects of such grace, and made happy by it, it would be monstrous not to be moved, and engaged to imitation. No consideration can be more natural than this, I am infinitely indebted to the goodness of God to me, and therefore it becomes me to be good to others, and to cultivate and encourage that affection to which I owe so much.

The grace which appears in the gospel is still more insinuating, and touches the tender passions, when we consider the sufferings and death of our Saviour. The greatest worth in the deepest distress, bearing it with all meekness and piety, merely to serve the purposes of

ſcene of goodneſs, the very nobleſt purpoſes of it, is a ſcene which cannot but moſt powerfully engage; begetting the utmoſt eſteem, and gratitude and love, and preparing the mind for imitation. Who that believes and conſiders what Chriſt has done to ſerve the deſigns of goodneſs, but will be determined to do whatſoever is in his power in concurrence with it? Who that contemplates his croſs with ſerious attention, but muſt love him, and like him be prepared to love the brethren? the Apoſtle *John* teaches, that if *Chriſt laid down his life for us, we ought* alſo, when we have a proper call to it, *to lay down our lives for the brethren.* 1 John iii. 16. And the Apoſtle *Paul* ſpeaks of conſtraints in the love of Chriſt; *the Love of Chriſt conſtraineth us.* This he felt himſelf as much as any man, and was as much under the power of ingenuous affection. *What mean you to weep and to break my heart, for I am ready not to be bound only but alſo to die at* Jeruſalem *for the name of the Lord Jeſus.* Acts xxi. 13. And as he was zealous for the honour of his great leader, ſo he every where expreſſes the tendereſt affection to his fellow Chriſtians, and the moſt ſollicitous care to do good to mankind. Stopping at no labour, daunted at no ſufferings, in his endeavours to convert and ſave them. *He was made all things*

things to all men, that he might by all means save some. 1 Cor. ix. 22. V.

Upon the whole, nothing can be more incongruous than to profeſs the Chriſtian faith, love to God, and love to the Redeemer, and yet to be without charity, *which is the end of the commandment*, the end of the Chriſtian religion; and which a true ſenſe of the love of God, and of Chriſt muſt neceſſarily produce. Without doubt the ſpirit of Chriſt is a ſpirit of love, and where *the love of God is ſhed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghoſt*, there will be charity: *For as he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love*, 1 John iv. 8; *ſo he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him*. iv. 16. This is the ſum of all moral excellency; this is the reſpect in which we are partakers of a Divine nature, and in which we have fellowſhip with the Father and the Son. And all pretenſions to the ſpirit of Chriſt, to the inhabitation of God and of the Holy Ghoſt, and to divine influence upon the ſpirit; all pretenſions to the new creature, and to be born from above, without charity and good affection, are vain and enthuſiaſtical. For if the ſpirit of God dwells in us it will make us like God; if we are the offſpring of God we muſt have his nature in us, which is love.

Laſtly, for encouraging the good affections in us, the goſpel has aſſured us, that we ſhall not

ſhall not be final loſers by any thing we do, however expenſive to our preſent intereſt, from a principle of true goodneſs and charity; on the contrary, that our reward ſhall be great, and we ſhall be called the Children of the higheſt, and be provided for, as ſuch. Thus all the conſiderations, which a regard to ſelf might preſent to us, in oppoſition to charity and the tendencies of goodneſs in the heart, are quite overballanced; and all ſuggeſtions of that kind ſilenced; ſo that really it is for our intereſt to cultivate love and good diſpoſitions; to ſtrengthen them as much as we can; and by repeated acts and daily exerciſe to contract thoſe habits which become the diſciples of Chriſt, and the children of God.

I have haſtened through theſe particulars, for there is indeed no laboured illuſtration neceſſary to ſhew that the ſpirit of chriſtianity is a ſpirit of love. Nor was any one ever ſo abſurd as to queſtion it. So far as theory goes, all are agreed; all parties and denominations of chriſtians. Even thoſe who moſt barbarouſly perſecute their fellow chriſtians, and are ſo far loſt to humanity as to put them to the moſt cruel tortures, as well as death, pretend that charity is the principle of all; they do theſe cruel things from love to the ſouls of the ſufferers. And it muſt be a very ſpecious pretence, which can be made uſe of to colour ſuch horrid barbarities. No

No one but will acknowledge that charity hath, as a fine, indeed, the most excellent thing. But, my Brethren, the sincere uniform practice of it is another matter: And it highly concerns us to look into our own hearts, that in this we be not defective. *Let us love one another not in word and in tongue*, as the Apostle *John* speaks, *but in deed and in truth.* And hereby alone shall we know that we are of the truth, that is, that we are the true disciples of Christ, and shall assure our hearts before him, 1 iii. c. 18. v. but as the same author has observed, in the 17. v. *Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* If men pretend to a good and charitable spirit, but, at the same time, the natural fruits of it do not appear in their actions, the profession is vain. I speak not now only of almsgiving, tho' that is indeed one great branch of charity, but of all good offices which are the proper expressions of it. Some there are who very evidently shew that they are animated by this good spirit, and who labour all that is in their power to do good to others; whose charity is not at all confined to relations, or party, or denomination of any kind, but extends to all. These characters are undoubtedly the fairest ornaments of human nature. But are they not

V.

rare?

[illegible] are there not a thousand good offices which men have in the power of their hands to do to their neighbours with very little trouble and expence to themselves, which are neglected? And is this to be expected from the disciples of Christ? But were this all, there were the less to be said; we see men professing Christianity who are injurious to their neighbours, and put them to pain, hurting their interest and estate, or reputation, or both. Sometimes men are led to this by a spirit of malice, and envy, and resentment; sometimes it is done, where there does not appear any malice, from a kind of unnatural pleasure in detracting from others, and giving them uneasiness; as if this were a matter in which men might wantonly divert themselves; and in many cases where interests interfere, the selfish spirit so prevails, that they are for helping themselves at the expence of others, and doing the most direct unrighteousness. But is it not natural to ask, what shall be the end of these things? How must men appear to themselves when seriously called to an account by their own conscience? How shall they answer, when called to account before God, who is love, and to whom their temper stands in direct opposition.

But, my Brethren, let it be remembered

that God tries the heart. And our abſtain- Serm.
ing from flagrant inſtances of injuſtice on the V.
one hand, or doing many good offices on the
other, does not at all ſatisfy the demands of
his law. He requires a principle of cordial
love and goodneſs reigning within, which
ſhall habitually and uniformly direct the con-
duct. His law is that we ſhould love one
another, and from a principle of love do
good. Now, I doubt not, but there are very
many, whoſe lives make a fair enough ap-
pearance, who, if they were to examine them-
ſelves impartially, would find great defect in
point of inward principle and affection. To
have an ingenuous and hearty concern to do
all the good we can to our neighbour, and
to take pains to cultivate and ſtrengthen this
principle, is, I am afraid, a rare thing. And
perhaps it is as much ſo, to labour with our-
ſelves in caſting out concealed envy, and un-
juſt averſions and hatred, unchriſtian reſent-
ments and revenge. Where pride and a ſel-
fiſh ſpirit have place, theſe are very apt to
obtain along with them. And perhaps men
may in a great meaſure overlook, or even in-
dulge them, when they are far enough, for
many reaſons, from giving them vent in ex-
ternal injurious actions. Our care certainly
ought to be to cleanſe the heart: and to do

SERM. V. this thoroughly will require no ſmall diſci-
pline: Yet it is neceſſary, and we cannot be accepted of God without it. The Apoſtle *John* teaches us, and it is perfectly agreeable to plain ſenſe, that he *who hateth his brother*, in his heart, *is a murtherer*; that is, he would be one if not reſtrained by fear of puniſhment, and ſo is really one in the ſight of God, *and no murtherer can have eternal life abiding in him.* 1 John iii. 15. To this then let us apply ourſelves, to root out all thoſe diſpoſitions which are really of a diabolical nature. *Let us put off all theſe, anger, wrath, malice, and filthy communication. Let us put on bowels of mercy, meekneſs, long ſuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man hath a quarrel againſt any, as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do you.* Col. iii. 8. *And be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Chriſt alſo loved you and gave himſelf for you an offering and a ſacrifice to God of a ſweet ſmelling ſavour.* Eph. v. 1.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

The tendency of Chriſtianity to deliver men from what diſtracts the mind and perverts the judgment, and to yield that compoſure and ſerenity, which give them the free uſe of their rational powers.

2 TIM. I. 7.

For God hath not given us the ſpirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind.

THE value of a ſound mind will be beſt underſtood, by conſidering the deplorable ſtate they are ſeen to be in, whe are deprived of it; and under the power of a diſtracted imagination, are precipitated into not only the greateſt extravagan-

SERM. VI. cies and wilfulneſſes of conduct, but into the greateſt dangers and ſufferings. In ſome caſes the diſtemper riſes to ſuch a degree, that men are not only loſt to all the purpoſes of life, with reſpect to themſelves and others; but become ſo outrageous and hurtful, that violent methods are neceſſary to reſtrain them, and prevent the miſchief they would do. Many are the different forms in which this diſtraction of mind appears, ſome of them much more frightful than others, but all of them moſt affecting to a ſerious obſerver, and they wonderfully ſhew the frailty of human nature and the vanity of life.

But when the diſorders of the mind do not appear in ſuch frightful forms, nor make men quite uſeleſs to ſociety, and are in ſome meaſure under management and reſtraint by reaſon and reflection, yet they may prevail ſo as to take greatly from the enjoyment of life, and give the perſons themſelves and their friends great pain; of which we meet with many inſtances. An unlucky caſt of imagination will make a ſtate, otherwiſe fortunate, very miſerable, and render the powers of the mind, though perhaps of diſtinguiſhed eminency in their ſeveral kinds, of very little uſe to the purpoſes of ſociety or private life. O! How happy is it to enjoy a ſound and compoſed mind, to have the free uſe of the rational

rational powers, and to be able to improve them ſucceſsfully to the great ends for which they are given us! VI.

I am at preſent to conſider ſoundneſs of mind, particularly as the practice of religion is concerned in it, and ſo far as it may be accounted a virtue. And I ſhall, in the firſt place, make ſome obſervations which tend to give us juſt notions wherein a ſound mind conſiſts. Secondly, I ſhall ſhew that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is the ſpirit of a ſound mind.

For the firſt, I humbly think all that can be meant by ſoundneſs of mind may be comprehended under two heads, *viz.* our being able to judge of things juſtly and according to nature, and our cleaving ſteadily to ſuch judgments, and purſuing them in the conduct of life.

Firſt, our being able to judge of things juſtly and according to truth and nature. This is the main thing. For if the matters, concerning which we are called to judge, appear in a wrong light, and we are led aſtray by a deluſive imagination and falſe appearances, although in matters of meer ſpeculation, this may be attended with no bad conſequences, yet with reſpect to practice and the conduct of life, eſpecially in affairs of importance, it muſt be exceedingly hurtful.

SECT. VI. Some men have originally weak minds, have little penetration, and are eaſily impoſed upon; others have a great natural ſagacity, and can enter deep into the matters propoſed to them, ſearching things to the bottom, and are not eaſily deceived; and it is with pleaſing wonder we hear ſuch perſons ſpeak upon the ſubjects on which their minds have been exerciſed, purſuing truth and diſcovering it through much darkneſs and perplexity, and ſetting things in ſuch a light, as makes it clear and plain to thoſe who could not have gone any length in their own enquiries. But ſo far as weakneſs or ſtrength of judgment are the neceſſary conſequences of the original make of the mind, and the various meaſure of abilities with which men are endowed, they do not ſo properly come under conſideration at preſent. What the ſubject naturally leads to, is, to conſider how the mind may be affected by things which are evinently in ſome meaſure in our power, what influence they may have to darken and perplex or diſtract it, and how theſe diſorders may be removed, and the mind preſerved in compoſure and the free uſe of our rational powers.

Our daily obſervations upon human life muſt fully convince us, that paſſions of all kinds have a tendency to diſtract the mind and pervert

vert the judgment. All undue vehemencies of them are necessarily attended with perturbation. So that men are not masters of themselves, nor have the free use of their powers. How many instances of this have we seen, where anger, fear, grief, melancholy, love, or any passion whatsoever, has got the ascendant, and been suffered to arise to an overgrown strength and vehemency. In proportion to that irregularity, the mind is lost to itself, and can form no sound judgment. For not only does the inward perturbation which always attends vehement passion, disorder and discompose the mind, and render it incapable of acting its part; but the prevailing passion does likewise give it a particular biass, with which impartial and sound judgment cannot consist. Things are set in a false and delusive light, and men are accordingly affected. And we see that men of the soundest minds in other respects, yet in those matters in which a particular passion has dominion over them, will think very wildly, and act a part which to all impartial on-lookeers appears quite out of nature and distracted. Is not anger a real madness, when it arises to the higher degrees? How mean and foolish a part will fear make men act when they are under the power of it? How extravagant the wildnesses of a melancholy imagination? Let

SERM. VI.

SERM. VI. men be ever ſo capable of judging and conducting themſelves in other reſpects, yet when any of theſe paſſions has poſſeſſion of the mind, the object will always appear in an unfair light, either different from what it really is, or greatly aggravated, or, in ſome caſes, as much leſſened; and ſo the judgment is led aſtray, and in conſequence of that, the conduct muſt be wrong and unnatural. This appears the moſt ſignally, and I may add moſt reproachfully, when ſelf-love and the private affections are ſo ſtrong, as to make men always partial in judgment, when their own intereſt is concerned, and capable of doing manifeſt injuſtice to others, even perhaps with the approbation of their own minds; ſuch an approbation as is the effect of that deluſive miſt, which ſelf-love caſts over the underſtanding, and by which the mind is quite perverted. It is really aſtoniſhing to obſerve, how men think, and will ſpeak upon matters where their minds are under ſuch powerful biaſs, incapable of being convinced by reaſon, and repreſenting things as differently from what they really are, as light is from darkneſs. The mind in ſuch a ſtate is in no wiſe to be truſted.

Farther, we are frequently led aſtray by prejudices and falſe aſſociations of ideas. What-

Whatever ways of thinking men have been long accustomed to, especially from their infancy, and which they have received as true, upon the authority of teachers of whom they have a high esteem, it is very hard to get rid of. This appears in matters of religion above all other things. How obstinately do men continue in errors, the most glaring and absurd, and of which the least degree of impartial consideration might convince them, only because they have been so taught to believe, and to account it a dangerous thing to believe otherwise? This prejudice is often seen to prevail even in men of wisdom and judgment, so as to make them embrace as truth, and earnestly contend for, the greatest absurdities; of which there are various instances in the superstitions of the heathen world; and many likewise in the history of the Christian Church. For certainly nothing in the superstition of any heathens could be more absurd, than some opinions which are received, and contended for by some denominations of Christians. But the power of prejudice and the influence of false associations of ideas appear in other matters, and in which one would think a person of common understanding might be easily undeceived. The instance commonly given is a full illustration of this. What connexion is

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there in reaſon or nature between darkneſs and ghoſts? And yet men who have been accuſtomed to this aſſociation of ideas from their infancy, have, many of them, found it very hard to get rid of it, ſo as to be perfectly eaſy in darkneſs, if alone; and ſome have never been able to endure it. But it is of far greater moment to obſerve, that ſuch falſe aſſociations are ſeen to prevail in the mind in matters of very great importance in human life; to prevail ſo generally, that it is rare to find one quite free from them. What connexion in the world is there between great wealth and the true enjoyment of human life? What connexion in reaſon, between the many phantaſtical diſtinctions which obtain in it, and true happineſs? And yet we ſee many are ſo much under the influence of ſuch prejudice, that they account life utterly miſerable without them. I do not ſay but wealth, and honour, and power, may be improved to good purpoſes, or that they are not deſirable upon account of many comforts and conveniencies which they furniſh; but to place the happineſs of human life in them, is juſt as great an abſurdity, and as much a contradiction to nature, as can be. And how much miſchief is done by ſuch aſſociations of ideas, when they ſo prevail as to regulate men's ſentiments and conduct? How many

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of the ſorrows of life, how many of the fears, how much of the envy and ſtrife, how much of the injuſtice and oppreſſion which appear in life, muſt be aſcribed to them? Happy is the man, who has got ſo much the maſtery of all prejudices of this kind, as to be able to embrace truth and nature in his judgments and ſentiments; ever following ſound reaſon and that only, and bringing all his opinions whatſoever to the teſt of it. SERM. VI.

Again, there are ſome very bad conſequences to the judgment and conduct, which follow upon a certain impatience of thought, and raſhneſs in judging, which are not uncommon. Some men are very happy in natural abilities, but theſe are in a great meaſure loſt to them, becauſe they cannot be at pains to uſe them in the beſt manner. There is a labour in ſerious thinking which they cannot bear; to examine things cloſely, and to compare them with attention and exactneſs, to purſue the truth through many deductions and conſequences, is too hard a taſk; and ſo, with a certain levity of mind, they are apt to reſt in the firſt appearances, and to take up with whatſoever plauſible opinion firſt offers; and thus it comes to paſs that they are often deceived, and men with a far leſs meaſure of abilities, by patience of thought, will underſtand more and judge better than they. There are many things

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Serm. VI. in which this raſhneſs in judging will appear only foolish, and cannot be hurtful; but in matters of importance in the conduct of life, especially in matters which concern the practice of religion, it is often very pernicious. And it is really ſtrange, to think how rare a thing it is for men, to accuſtom themſelves to cloſe and ſerious meditation. There are very many who, one would be tempted to imagine, never thought at all to any purpoſe; who diſcover ſo many odd inconſiſtencies, and ſuch weakneſs of judgment, even in things which are obvious and eaſily underſtood, and are ſo much ſtrangers to what nature itſelf muſt teach every one who will attend to it, that the improvement of the mind appears to be that which has been leaſt of all regarded. Sound wiſdom is not thus to be obtained. *They who ſeek her early ſhall find her.* They *who wait at the poſts of her doors*; but the negligent and unthinking muſt be content to go without that valuable treaſure.

Theſe things which greatly hurt the mind, and tend to pervert the judgment, I have laid before you, becauſe, as it will afterwards appear, that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is the ſpirit of a ſound mind, as it tends to deliver us from thoſe diſorders which are inconſiſtent with it; ſo the mentioning of theſe diſorders, by which the judgment is depraved, will contribute to

ſhew

ſhew wherein ſoundneſs of mind in this reſpect conſiſts. When a man is compoſed and ſerene in his thoughts, when the mind is not in a ſtate of perturbation by any vehemencies of paſſion, nor under a biaſs from it; when unjuſt prejudices are removed, and falſe aſſociations of ideas are broke through; when patience of thought and inquiry prepares a man for a cloſe attendance to reaſon and the beſt improvement of his thinking powers; then he is prepared for forming ſound judgments, and following truth and reaſon in his ſentiments and opinions.

And men of this happy turn of mind, are the moſt likely to cleave with ſteadineſs to the judgments they form, and purſue them in the conduct of life; which was the other thing I mentioned as entering into the notion of a ſound mind. To be obſtinately fixed in any judgments we have formed, where we have not, and cannot have certainty; and not to lie open to conviction and the means of it, is a very great weakneſs; and an aſſuming what does not at all become ſuch ſhort ſighted creatures, and who are in ſuch danger of being impoſed upon, even when pains are taken to judge according to truth. On the other hand, levity and inconſtancy, giddineſs and inconſiſtency in ſentiment, are very reproachful faults, and very diſtant from ſoundneſs of mind.

And

Sect. VI. And the very beſt abilities are, in a great meaſure, loſt to the fickle and inconſtant. Their conduct, as their ſentiments, will be quite uncertain, and men are never ſure of them. This has not only an appearance greatly to their diſadvantage, but is in many caſes very hurtful. The reſolutions being unſtable, the beſt deſigns may be loſt; deſigns inconvenient and evil may, as the preſent fancy directs, be purſued; truth and nature are not followed; and as the beauty of human life in that caſe, ſo the valuable purpoſes of it are in great danger of being loſt. It becomes a ſound mind to follow reaſon, and to be flexible to nothing elſe; to be ſteady in ſentiment and conduct; never to vary without reaſon, never to change but when there is reaſon; this ſhews a right mind; it makes life uniform and beautiful, and it is the ſure way to ſucceſs, with reſpect to the important purpoſes of it. But before I leave this head of diſcourſe, I would obſerve in the laſt place,

That nothing has by wiſe men been accounted more hurtful, or inconſiſtent with a ſound mind, than enthuſiaſm in matters of religion. The proper notion of this, is indeed, a religious madneſs: and in ſome it produces not only great perturbation of mind, but moſt amazing agitations of body too; ſo that they ſeem indeed to be in a phrenzy; their appear-

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ances frightful to the on-lookers, and very hard to be accounted for. Into what wild extravagancies that ſtrange ſpirit is capable of leading men, has been ſeen in many inſtances. It is very aſtoniſhing, that it ſhould get ſo much the better of reaſon and common ſenſe. But where the diſtemper has not riſen to ſuch a heighth, yet it has produced very untoward ſymptoms in thoſe, in whom it has to any degree prevailed; and been the cauſe of much diſquietude, as well as of leading them into very great errors in conduct. But however, this ſpirit ought to be carefully guarded againſt, and is in truth moſt diſtant from the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, yet ſuch, as under the pretence of oppoſing enthuſiaſm, ſet themſelves to run down, under that opprobrious name, all emotions of mind, all ardours of ſpirit in matters of religion, certainly go into a very dangerous extreme. Some perſons may be of a much cooler temper than others, and not eaſily moved or affected; but that true religion has a tendency to produce ardour and emotion of ſpirit, is, I think perfectly evident; and, according to the preſent conſtitution of human nature, it cannot be otherwiſe. Let any man of ſenſe, eſpecially of tenderneſs and delicacy of ſentiment and paſſion, peruſe the lives of ſome great men, and their heroic actions; and he will certainly find not only a

VI.

cool approbation of them, but moſt ſenſible emotions of ſpirit. Such impreſſions will be made upon the mind, as will have a very diſcernible effect upon what is uſually called the animal ſpirits. And he will find, admiration, love, ſympathy with theſe great men in ſuffering, or joy in their ſucceſs, riſe to a very high degree; and I ſhould not call it calmneſs, but inſenſibility, not to be moved by ſuch characters and actions. Now, when we conſider thoſe objects of affection which religion, eſpecially the chriſtian religion, preſents, we cannot, after having obſerved this conſtitution of the human mind, but imagine that there muſt be very natural emotions of the believing mind in converſing with them. Where have we amongſt the ſons of men any character like that of our Saviour? Here is inconceivable worth and perfect innocence in the deepeſt diſtreſs, bearing it in the beſt manner, to ſerve the moſt valuable purpoſes. Here is the greateſt and wiſeſt mind in conjunction with the beſt and the tendereſt heart; the Son of God and heir of all things appearing a man of ſorrows and acquainted with griefs; we ſee him at laſt expiring upon a croſs. We ſee him afterwards triumphing over death with the dignity which became him, and aſcending up on high. This is our Saviour, our moſt tender and affectionate friend,

friend, the bleſſed meſſenger of peace and immortality. Now will any man ſay it is natural and juſt to be moved with the ſtory of a *Brutus* or an *Epaminondas*, and not to be greatly moved with that of Jeſus? Shall we, in the laſt caſe, call it by the reproachful name of enthuſiaſm, which, in the former, we commend as indicating an amiable ſenſibility and tenderneſs of heart. But when we aſcend higher, and conſider the counſels of divine wiſdom and goodneſs, and the various glory of the Creator in framing and contriving the ſyſtem of the univerſe, and carrying it into execution by the irreſiſtible energy of his power; when we conſider that immenſe mind which is every where preſent, every where active, eternal perfect wiſdom, harmony, and order; muſt we not be ſtruck with the higheſt admiration? And ſhall this be called enthuſiaſm? We evidently ſee in the ſcriptures both of the Old and New Teſtament the expreſſions of great ardours of love to God and the Redeemer, and of admiration and joy which often riſes into perfect rapture: and it is impoſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe, where men have any delicacy and tenderneſs of ſentiment. We know that all paſſions, when raiſed, are attended with emotion, and it accompanies religious paſſions as well as others. I am very ſenſible,

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SERM. VI. and it ought to be carefully obſerved, that the ſubſtance and life of religion conſiſts in a conformity of heart, and conduct, to the will of God; that there may be vehement emotions of mind where this is in a great meaſure wanting; and that it may be, where it is attended with ſuch ardours as others feel. So that no man is to judge of his moral ſtate, by theſe affections of his ſpirit only, but by a conſciouſneſs of his departing from evil in his heart, and of his doing good. But tho' this is true, yet it does not at all follow, that the glorious and matchleſs objects to which religion, and eſpecially chriſtianity, directs our thoughts, are not fitted to excite paſſions of the nobleſt kind, and to raiſe them to great ſtrength. If it be aſked how we ſhall diſtinguiſh between theſe and irrational enthuſiaſm, or religious madneſs or phrenzy, I anſwer, the only teſt is truth and reaſon. When men hold any principles which are really falſe and can be proved to be ſo, and have apparently wrong notions of divine objects, and unjuſt aſſociations of ideas concerning them; whatever zeal or emotion they diſcover, this is all enthuſiaſm. But when our paſſions of the religious kind are raiſed by a juſt repreſentation of divine objects to the mind, and the belief of things which we evidently perceive to be true, then the more

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our hearts are warmed, 'tis certainly the bet- SERM.
ter. This ſort of enthuſiaſm, if it muſt be VI.
called ſo, will never hurt our underſtandings, or weaken our rational powers, but ſtrengthen them rather. It will never break in upon the compoſure of our minds, but will be the ſecurity of it, attended with light and ſerenity and peace. And to add no more, there may be ſuch a coolneſs in religion, even while men ſupport the profeſſion, and maintain the forms of it, as makes it good for nothing; which is always the caſe where, by the love of God, it does not form the mind into his likeneſs, and hallow all the active powers to the practice of virtue. And when men are in ſuch a ſtate, not cool in religious matters, but cold and inſenſible, whatever contempt they may pour on enthuſiaſm, they themſelves are in a ſtate no wiſe better, and which muſt end moſt fatally.

I proceed to the ſecond ſubject of diſcourſe, namely, to ſhew that the ſpirit of chriſtianity is the ſpirit of a ſound mind. Upon this I ſhall not inſiſt long.

Chriſtianity has an excellent tendency to reſtrain thoſe vain imaginations, and unruly paſſions, which ſo much diſtract the minds in which they reign, and pervert the judgment. The laws of it forbid all irregular vehemencies; and the genius of chriſtianity

SERM. VI. raiſes the heart and deſires, and directs the mind to thoſe glorious objects, which in their nature above all things engage. And when the heart is fixed upon them, as the moſt excellent and worthy of our beſt affections; paſſions for inferior objects, and theſe only are dangerous to the mind, loſe their ſtrength and no longer enſlave the ſoul, or rage in it. Once *the love of the Father* has the aſcendant, *the love of the world, and the things of the world*, and that unhappy train of paſſions which attend it, will be trampled upon. And as no paſſions do ſo diſturb and diſorder the ſpirit, as thoſe which are impure and directly ſinful, ſo the purity of the chriſtian ſpirit is a noble preſervative from them. And by *cleanſing* the heart *from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*, ſecures the tranquillity of the underſtanding, and maintains and ſupports the authority of reaſon and ſound judgment; not to ſpeak of the great advantage which muſt ariſe to the rational powers, from that abſtinence from vice, into which corrupt paſſions unreſtrained by conſcience, hurry men; that abſtinence, I ſay, to which the laws of chriſtianity bind us. It is obſerved by the prophet Hoſ. iv. 11. *that whoredom and wine take away the heart*, that is, corrupt the affections, and ſpoil the taſte, polluting the ſoul, and rendering it abominable. But it may be truly

truly ſaid, that they hurt the underſtanding alſo, and greatly enfeeble the rational powers; they darken the mind and make it impatient of thought and inquiry; and conſequently, which is often the caſe, prepare men for thinking and acting in a manner which ſober reaſon abhors. The purity of the heart and manners, therefore, muſt be moſt friendly to the underſtanding, and have a benign influence upon the powers of the mind, to preſerve them in ſtrength and vigour, habile and fit to ſerve the important ends for which they were beſtowed upon us. SERM. VI.

In the ſecond place, chriſtianity tends to make the mind and judgment ſound, as it begets tranquillity of ſoul and a pleaſing ſerenity. There is in it a peace which paſſeth all underſtanding. It ſets before us the moſt comfortable proſpects; it gives us the moſt joyful hopes. In theſe the believing mind reſts ſatisfied, and has the peaceful enjoyment of itſelf. Now, this ſerene and joyful calm of the ſoul, juſt the reverſe of painful tumult and perturbation, moſt admirably aids the underſtanding, and gives a man the full uſe of his rational faculties. Whatever diſturbs the mind, darkens and hurts it; whatever tends to compoſe and make the ſtate pleaſing, encourages and ſtrengthens it. Let

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a man be under the power of care and anxiety; ſuppoſe him entangled and perplexed, in a diſquieting and hopeleſs ſtate, and, oh, how diſtant will he find himſelf from a ſound mind and judgment? Theſe cannot dwell beſide hurry and confuſion, and love harmony, order, and peace. And the religion of Chriſt when practiſed in ſincerity, as it tends to calm all the paſſions, to deliver men from all perturbation, eſpecially from painful anxiety and ſolicitude, and to diffuſe joy and ſerenity through the ſoul, muſt likewiſe tend to prepare men for forming ſound judgments, and to think and act according to truth and nature. There is no occaſion to multiply words in ſhewing the importance of this; a ſound and ſerene mind are ſo nearly allied in nature, that every man who reflects upon himſelf muſt be ſenſible of it; and, how much we owe to that religion which has preſented us with ſuch proſpects, and ſuch iſſues of life, as perfectly quiet the believing and virtuous mind in all circumſtances, and makes it reaſonable in *all things to give thanks* and rejoice.

But, in the third place, what is moſt of all to be inſiſted on, is this, that true religion fixes mens minds right with reſpect to the great ends of life, and the methods of purſuing them with ſucceſs. For this reaſon it

is, no doubt, that in the writings of Solomon, religion has generally the name of *wiſdom* given it. And it is indeed true wiſdom. For it certainly anſwers the moſt valuable ends of it. Let a man be ſuppoſed ever ſo weak with reſpect to intellectual abilities; yet, if he is truly religious, he will certainly do right, and act a wiſe part in the moſt important of all concernments. He will think and act according to truth and nature. It has been often obſerved, by good judges of human life, that plain honeſty frequently ſupplies the room of ſagacity and penetration in the common affairs of life; and that, by acting a worthy and good part, men ſhall come better off, than they could, by all the cunning imaginable, without integrity. But, ſuppoſing in many affairs they ſhould be quite at a loſs, it makes no great matter, if, with reſpect to the principal buſineſs of life, they judge right, and ſucceed. He is always to be accounted a wiſe man, who judgeth right in matters of the greateſt importance, and which moſt concern him. And if he diſcovers a ſound mind in theſe, all is well. The principles of natural religion, to men who can purſue them, will afford good and ſafe direction in judging and acting. But chriſtianity has caſt ſo clear a light upon all theſe matters, and given direction ſo full and clear, that no one who is SERM. VI.

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acquainted with it can be at a loſs in judging, and no one who purſues the dictates of it, can fail of ſucceſs. So that the ſpirit of chriſtianity is indeed the ſpirit of a ſound mind; for it fixes men in right judgments, and according to truth and ſoberneſs; and ſets their way ſo clear before them, that, as the Prophet ſpeaks, *a way-faring man tho' a fool ſhall not err therein.* Iſa. xxxv. 8.

Nor does it leſs contribute to make men ſtedfaſt in purſuing the way it chalks out to them. For it furniſhes the nobleſt and moſt engaging motives. It deters men from contrary courſes by the moſt alarming threatnings. As the ſpirit of chriſtianity prevails, the love of the world and all its enſnaring luſts are weakened and die. The reliſh is formed for the pure pleaſures of virtue and holineſs, and the mind engaged by a ſenſe of the greateſt gain in it. Men are encouraged to hold on their courſe by the repeated promiſes of divine aſſiſtance, and that a mighty power is upon their ſide which will never leave nor forſake them. So that chriſtianity tends to eſtabliſh and confirm the mind in good reſolutions, to make the life uniform, and preſerve men from that giddy inconſtancy, of which a ſound mind is abhorrent. *The path of the juſt is as a ſhining light, which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.* Prov. iv.

iv. 18. The ſpirit of Chriſt *ſtabliſhes, ſtrengthens, ſettles men,* ſo that they are *ſtedfaſt, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.* This is the evident tendency of that ſpirit; and this is all that I ſhall ſay to ſhew that it is the ſpirit of a ſound mind. Sermon VI.

I ſhall conclude the diſcourſe with this one obſervation, namely, that hence we may learn how to judge of thoſe characters, who deſpiſe ſerious religion, and are ready to treat ſuch as make it their buſineſs in life, with ſcoff and ridicule. Some do this from an impure and vain imagination which has dominion over them; pleaſure and jollity, and the gratification of ſenſe and its appetites, is all that they ſeem to ſet their hearts upon. And for ſtrict virtue and religion, it is at the greateſt poſſible diſtance from their thoughts. They have a paradiſe of their own framing, and this is all they deſire. Others are of a quite different turn, tho' equally unfriendly to religion. The world and the ſpirit of it have them in poſſeſſion; they ſtudy to manage their affairs with ſagacity and penetration, and value themſelves upon this. Gain is the only ſubſtantial thing in their eſteem; let them ſucceed in this one thing, and for the mighty proſpects virtue and religion give, they will eaſily compound the matter, and let who will poſſeſs themſelves of them and

SERM. VI. enjoy them. *Who will ſhew unto us any good*, is the conſtant cry, but with reſpect to conſcience, and the favour of God, and an unſeen world, they are eaſy. As if it were a jeſt that any of theſe things ſhould be worth their care.

But let men think and ſay what they will, under the power of corrupt prejudice, one thing is certain, that, as men, we are obliged to liſten to reaſon and nature, and be directed by them. Now, the principles upon which religion reſts are as evident as any moral principles can be; ſuch as the being of a God, or relation to him as the ſubjects of his moral government, the eternal differences between good and evil, the various affections of the human heart, the tendency of virtue to make men happy, and ſuch things as theſe. Can any man look upon theſe principles as ridiculous? Any man who is not perfectly an atheiſt? But if there is ſober truth in them, is it indeed acting a wiſe part to be negligent of them, to conduct life in direct oppoſition to the tendency of them? Is not this the greateſt abſurdity and folly? But, if men believe they are true, is it not quite unaccountable that they ſhould not attend to them, and be influenced by them? Now, if we cleave to the principles of natural religion as truth, we ſhall find that they point to the

ſame

ſame conduct of life with the religion of Christ, and ſhall be prepared to embrace this with gladneſs, as an inſtitution attended with great advantages; and ſhall find that in acting the part of ſincere chriſtians, we act agreeable to truth and nature, and as men; ſo that indeed the ſpirit of chriſtianity is the ſpirit of wiſdom and a ſound mind. This is *the wiſdom which is from above, which is pure, and peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, full of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy.* Jam. iii. 17. SERM. VI.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

The Nature of the Human Soul; that it is a ſubſtance different from matter; of the Faculties of it, and particularly of the Operations of the Underſtanding.

MATTHEW XVI. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own Soul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Soul?

EVERY where around us, in his works we ſee moſt manifeſt traces of the wiſdom, and goodneſs, and power of God; and indeed all his works praiſe him and ſpeak his high perfections. But they are no where ſo conſpicuouſly diſplayed in this world, as in

in the human frame and powers. The ſtruc- SERM.
ture of our bodies is wonderful, but that of VII.
our minds much more ſo. It is in this re-
ſpect principally that man is made but a lit-
tle lower than the Angels, and crowned with
glory and honour; and the human ſoul is
more peculiarly conſiderable in the works of
God, as it is formed for an eternal duration
of being; and ſhall ſubſiſt with all its powers
and faculties for ever. Now, when we add
to this, that it is capable of very high happi-
neſs in that eternal exiſtence, and alſo ſuſ-
ceptible of great unutterable miſery; and that
the one, or the other, ſhall be every perſon's
portion, according to his moral conduct in
this world; this ſhews the infinite impor-
tance of a perſon's conducting himſelf aright:
And moreover, how utterly inſignificant and
contemptible any thing a man can gain in
this world, all the world, if he could gain
and make it his property, if he muſt on ac-
count of it *loſe his own ſoul*; that is, make
himſelf eternally wretched. If a perſon is
ſuppoſed under a ſentence of condemnation
to ſuch endleſs miſery, what would he not
give in exchange for his ſoul, and as the price
of his redemption? *For*, adds our Saviour,
in the following words, *the Son of Man ſhall
come in the glory of his Father, with his Angels,
and then ſhall he reward every man according*

to

SERM. VII. *to his works. To them,* as the Apoſtle *Paul* hath expreſſed it, Rom. ii. 7. *who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but to them who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, upon every ſoul of man who doth evil, of the* Jew *firſt and alſo of the* Gentile; *for there is no reſpect of perſons with God.*

Theſe words lay before us what to us is the moſt important of all ſubjects; and I propoſe to diſcourſe upon it in the following method.

Firſt, To conſider the nature and faculties of the human ſoul, in which the original excellency of it appeareth.

Secondly, To ſhew that the happineſs or miſery of it in an endleſs duration, is to be the reſult of the moral ſtate and conduct.

Thirdly, According to our Saviour's deſign, ſhew of what infinite moment to us it is, that our ſouls ſhould be ſaved from perdition, and inherit that happineſs which is promiſed to the wiſe and good.

Firſt, It is propoſed to conſider the nature and faculties of the human ſoul, or of that in us, which is the principle of ſenſation, of thought, of reaſoning, of choice and of action; and which is the ſeat of many various inſtincts and affections. What theſe are, we cannot but know from reflection and experience.

But

But when we come to inquire into the ſubſtance or being which is endowed with theſe powers, we ſhall find it an inquiry not eaſily ſatisfied. The very truth is, that we know nothing of the eſſence or ſubſtance, ſtrictly ſpeaking, of any being whatever; many of the properties of various things we ſee clearly: but with regard to the ſubject in which they are inherent, we are abſolute ſtrangers. To take the moſt obvious inſtance of this, what ſo familiar to us as matter or body? We think we know it in its various kinds with which we are daily converſant; but when we come to conſider with ourſelves, and reflect with ſome exactneſs, we ſhall find, that all we know is only the colour, the ſhape, the weight, and the manner in which one part of matter is ſeen to affect another, when applied to it; and ſuch other things which are only the properties of body; but what the internal conſtitution or eſſence of it is we know not. In the ſame manner, with reſpect to mind, or that which is the principle of reaſoning, of chooſing and willing, and of acting, we know perfectly theſe by reflection; but that eſſence which is the ſubject of them, we know not. I have taken particular notice of this, as an introduction to an inquiry, which is of great conſequence in treating of the ſoul of man; namely, whether it is a material or immaterial

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material ſubſtance; or in other words, whether it is corporeal, or of a ſubſtance different in kind, and to which we give the name of ſpirit. I ſay this inquiry ſeems to be of great conſequence; for if all which is in us is matter or body, when we only attend to the diſſolution of the animal frame, it is natural enough to conclude, indeed upon that ſuppoſition, one cannot but conclude, that there is an end of the man. But if there is lodged in theſe bodies a mind, which is of a ſubſtance or eſſence intirely diſtinct from body, and that may ſubſiſt independent of it, then quite other thoughts and views will be ſuggeſted to us. Some have pleaded that body, and the mechaniſm of it's parts, and animal life, is the whole of man; and therefore that at death, his being conſidered as man, is terminated. But in oppoſition to this miſerably low way of thinking, concerning human nature, the greateſt part of the wiſeſt and moſt knowing of mankind have thought, and ſtrongly argued, that the human ſoul is a principle intirely different from any thing material, and for it's ſubſiſtence quite independent of body; and it muſt be owned that their arguments are very ſtrong, and amount to the higheſt degree of probability. If I give the ſum of them in a few plain words, I hope it will not be accounted an improper digreſſion.

It

It has been already obſerved, that we do not know the real eſſence of any thing; of body, more than we do of Spirit; but that we know only their properties. Now, when we obſerve the properties of what we call mind, ſuch as a power of thinking, reaſoning, chooſing, and willing; and obſerve the affections which diſcover themſelves in the heart of man; we muſt ſee that they are intirely different from thoſe properties which we diſcern in body, I may ſay, oppoſite to them; ſuch as ſhape, colour, hardneſs or ſoftneſs, and ſuch other things. Indeed, the properties of matter which are known to us ſeem quite incompatible with mind; if a man were to talk of the length or breadth, of the ſhape or colour of thought, he muſt render himſelf very ridiculous; or of thinking or reaſoning, as white or black, as round or angular, as hard or ſoft. Now, when we ſee that the properties of matter do in no ſort agree with thoſe of mind, or the thinking principle, but are indeed contrary to them, is it not unavoidable that we conclude the ſubjects, in which theſe contrary qualities ſubſiſt, muſt be perfectly different from one another? I had almoſt ſaid it is impoſſible they can be the ſame thing. SERM. VII.

Farther, it has been really demonſtrated, that a reſiſtance to motion is eſſential to matter, and that therefore it cannot move itſelf, can-

SERM. VII. not act, but is always acted upon by ſome power, which therefore is eſſentially different from itſelf. But as every one is ſenſible of the acting of his own ſoul, ſo he muſt conclude that his ſoul, whatever it be, is a thing eſſentially different from matter or body. In a word, if we had nothing but matter in the world, we ſhould never have had motion or activity; and to aſcribe activity to that, to which a reſiſtance to all motion is eſſential, is indeed a very great abſurdity. Again, we know by reflection, that the mind is one ſimple undivided principle, the ſame at all times; it is one thing or being; now, it is apparent, there can be in matter no ſuch thing as one undivided principle: the infinite diviſibility of it excludeth this intirely; ſo that it cannot be the ſubject of, but muſt be a thing eſſentially different from mind and thought.

Theſe arguments I have mentioned in the moſt ſummary way poſſible; they are much enlarged upon in the writings of thoſe authors who have careſully applied their thoughts to them; and have been ſet in ſuch a light, that the truth ſeems to have been demonſtrated: But as they may perhaps appear a little too abſtracted for ſuch a diſcourſe, I ſhall not farther enlarge; but cannot help obſerving, that if nature doth afford ſufficient proofs in this great point, they are very well worthy of be-

ing attended to; and will the better prepare the mind for receiving the great principles of the chriſtian faith. SERM. VII.

The opinions contrary to what I have been aſſerting, are in truth very prejudicial; for if a perſon is once perſuaded, that there is nothing in his whole compoſition but matter put into motion, the tranſition is very eaſy, from this, to a perſuaſion, that when the bodily frame is diſſolved, and there is a ceſſation of motion in it, then the man is no more: And upon theſe principles what muſt have become of the religion of the antients? Indeed, where men are by revelation aſſured of the reſurrection of the dead, there the belief of a future ſtate may be conſiſtent with a notion that the mind is material, or, which to the purpoſes of morality and religion is the ſame thing, cannot act out of, or independent of body. But why ſhould any one, unleſs forced to it by the appearances, the manifeſt appearances of truth, entertain a notion, by which many of the arguments, taken from the light of nature, for a future ſtate are given up at once, and the great ſtreſs laid upon that revelation, with which a great part of the world have never been favoured? This is not at all ſerving the intereſts of religion. Yet this is a cauſe in which ſome moderns have engaged with great zeal, as being moſt favourable to revelation; in which there appears

SERM. VII. to me to be a very dangerous miſtake; and if we will give heed to the plain doctrines of the New Teſtament in this great matter, we ſhall ſee, that they are perfectly agreeable to the principles which have been laid down in this diſcourſe; for there a ſeparate ſtate of the ſoul, between the diſſolution of the body by death, and the reſurrection of it, is clearly taught; indeed ſo clearly, that it is a wonder how believers can reſiſt this evidence. I ſhall quote to this purpoſe but a very few paſſages. The expreſſion of our bleſſed Saviour upon the croſs to the penitent thief is very remarkable, Luke xxiii. 43. *Verily I ſay unto thee, to-day ſhalt thou be with me in paradiſe*; not in a ſtate of inſenſibility ſurely, or in a ſtate of non-exiſtence; that is no paradiſe, and no one will imagine that our bleſſed Lord was in ſuch a ſtate. There are alſo ſome paſſages in the writings of the apoſtle Paul, which are very clear and ſtrong, 2 Cor. v. 6. *Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilſt we are at home in the body, we are abſent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by ſight; we are confident, I ſay, and willing rather to be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord; wherefore we labour, that whether we be preſent or abſent, we may be accepted of him.* Is it to be preſent with the Lord, to be in a ſtate of inſenſibility? Or if that were the caſe, could it ever enter into the

the apoſtle's mind to ſpeak in this ſtrain? That he had moſt certainly an idea of the ſoul's ſubſiſting and acting out of the body, is plain likewiſe from his expreſſions in the 12th Chapter of this Epiſtle, 2d. verſe. *I knew a man in Chriſt above fourteen years ago, whether in the body, I cannot tell, or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth; ſuch an one caught up to the third heaven; and I knew ſuch a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth; how that he was caught up into paradiſe, and heard unſpeakable words, which it is not poſſible for a man to utter.* Now, if it had not been his opinion, that the ſpirit could be ſenſible, and act, out of body, he could have been at no loſs to know that he was not out of the body, no loſs at all. It is likewiſe in very ſtrong terms that he expreſſeth himſelf in the firſt chapter of the epiſtle to the Philippians, 21 ver. *To me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain; but if I live in the fleſh, this is the fruit of my labour; yet what I ſhall chooſe, I wot not; for I am in a ſtrait betwixt two, having a deſire to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far better; nevertheleſs, to abide in the fleſh is more needful for you.* Now, who can imagine, that by the apoſtle's departing and being with Chriſt, he meant being in a ſtate of utter inſenſibility? No ſurely, he meant a ſtate in which he ſhould have a much better en- SERM. VII.

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joyment of himself than ever he had upon earth. So the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. 12. ver. 22. *But you are come unto mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.* Surely these spirits of the just, made perfect, have a capacity of sensation and action. I shall not mention any more passages of scripture. These clearly enough prove that the spirit is really a different thing from the body, and can subsist and be happy without it; and no doubt be miserable too; and this hath been the sense of the church in all ages: They had indeed an opinion, and for this there wanteth not reason, that the spirits of good men, in the intermediate state, had not the completion of their bliss; had not their full reward, till the resurrection and the general judgment; and that this should be the commencement of their perfect felicity; but no one dreamed of their intermediate state, as a state of utter insensibility, which is indeed contrary to the dictates of reason, as well as of the holy scriptures. Let us rest assured, that what in us thinketh and acteth, what is the seat of sentiment and affection, is a thing different from matter, and

not

not to be affected, ſo as to be deſtroyed and deprived of its powers, by the diſſolution of the material frame: and when our Maker called us at firſt into exiſtence, and gave us to be men, he conferred this gift upon us, as what was never to be recalled. SERM. VII.

Having thus ſaid a few things concerning the nature of the human ſoul; let us, in the next place, take a view of the powers and faculties, with which our Maker hath endowed us; this may, in ſeveral reſpects, be pleaſing and profitable. It is pleaſing to think how bountiful our Maker hath been to us, and how he hath diſtinguiſhed us above all the other creatures in this world; it is not poſſible to ſurvey this work of God, without ſeeing ſuch contrivance and wiſdom, ſuch variety and uniformity in it, and ſuch beauty, as muſt excite pleaſing admiration in our minds: and it muſt be extremely profitable, to be well acquainted with our frame and powers, and the improvement they are capable of to the great ends of life; which ends, that very frame and theſe powers clearly enough point out to us.

Under this head I ſhall diſtinctly conſider the underſtanding, the will, and the affections.

Firſt, the underſtanding; that faculty, by which we receive the ideas or perceptions of

SERM. VII. things, by which we judge concerning them, and acquire the knowledge of truth. Sometimes the agreement or disagreement of our ideas compared together, or, in other words, the truth or falsehood of what we are to judge concerning, is so clear, that it forceth in a manner the assent; and it is impossible that any doubt should remain. This is the case in all those things where the truth is self-evident. But in many more instances, we cannot come by the knowledge of the truth, without reasoning and argument, and from things which are certain, deducing other truths by way of consequence; and the faculty of doing this is of the greatest use; it is indeed inconceivable what fields of knowledge are laid open to us by it, and what pleasure the mind sometimes hath in such operations; as is apparent in the various sciences. But the knowledge we attain would comparatively yield us little pleasure or advantage, if there was not a power in the mind of retaining it. What a vast and melancholy difference between such as discover a capacity of judging and reasoning, but immediately lose the remembrance of what they have been engaged in; which is not unfrequently the case in the declensions of nature; what a vast difference, I say, between them, and such as have a clear remembrance

of

of what hath paſſed in their minds, and to whom, the knowledge they have attained, is always a ready treaſure! As there is nothing in the human frame more wonderful than this power of retaining ſo many different things in the mind, without confuſion, and of calling them up to notice at pleaſure; ſo there is ſcarcely any power more uſeful. Without it indeed all our labours after knowledge would be in a great meaſure loſt, and human nature would not only be a moſt unfiniſhed thing, but the very common buſineſs of life could not be carried on. I have to add, that the application of our knowledge to practice, and to ſerve the purpoſes of life, is what we call wiſdom: when men judiciouſly propoſe ends of action to themſelves, and purſue thoſe ends by ſuch means as are proper, and likely to be effectual; in this, what we commonly call ſound judgment appeareth. But it ought to be attended to, that the fixing the great and ultimate ends of life is not the work of mere underſtanding or reaſon; for here the heart and affections have the largeſt ſhare, as will afterwards appear. But I meant only to mention, not to enlarge upon theſe things; which every one will be abundantly ſenſible of by reflecting on the operations of his own mind. SERM. VII.

What

SERM. VII. What I would principally enlarge on, are the obſervations and reflections which naturally offer themſelves upon this ſubject.

And, firſt, as God giveth to men the powers of underſtanding and of acquiring knowledge, which *Elihu* very juſtly, in the book of *Job*, aſcribeth to the inſpiration of the Almighty; ſo he hath, according to his ſovereign will and pleaſure, given to different perſons different meaſures of it; to ſome great penetration and acuteneſs in judging, and a mind capable of attaining to very high degrees of knowledge; to others a much ſmaller capacity, who learn with difficulty, and who cannot judge with exactneſs. This variety in the meaſure of the intellectual abilities, is evident and obvious to all; and the attainments in knowledge may be expected, generally ſpeaking, to be proportionable; it will be always ſo, where the means of improvement and the application of the powers to the uſe of them are equal: and inded, upon diſcipline and improvement a great deal dependeth. It is often ſeen that perſons to whom nature hath not been very bountiful in her gifts, have by a very careful improvement of the ſcanty meaſure they have received, far exceeded others, of powers and abilities originally much ſuperior. But whatever dif-

difference different degrees of improvement may make, yet certainly there is a very great and conſpicuous difference in the meaſure of the natural gifts, and in the particular caſt of the mind to certain kinds of ſcience. This original difference is to be aſcribed to the ſovereign pleaſure of our Maker only, *who* in this *giveth no account of his matters*. There is as great ſovereignty in this, as in determining the original meaſure of the ſtature, or the natural ſtrength of the veſſels of the human body; and to the will of our Maker, in all theſe appointments, we muſt, as his creatures and ſubjects, humbly ſubmit; and remember that we are accountable to him only for the talents we have received, and not for what we have not received. To have a ſmall and ſcanty meaſure of abilities is no man's fault; but not to improve what he hath, in the beſt manner he can, is blame-worthy. And indeed we ſee, that eminency in the powers and faculties of the mind, is often like eminency in other things; it proves unhappineſs and miſery to men, as it betrays them into great ſnares, and makes them capable of doing miſchief, to which, without ſuch gifts, they would not have been equal. Serm. VIII.

But ſecondly, how precious is the gift of ſuch an extenſive capacity of knowledge as our Maker hath conferred on mankind! I ſpeak now

Serm. VII. now of the common measure of abilities; a capacity so extensive, that even in our imaginations we cannot set any certain limits to it; never have we learn'd so much, but that we are capable of learning more; and with the advances men make in knowledge, the capacity of receiving more is seen to extend itself and grow. Now, as we are made for an eternal duration of being, and the eternal use of our active powers, what a pleasing prospect doth this open to us! How delightful is knowledge to the mind, as light is to the eye! What a pleasing variety in it! How must that delight grow, without measure, as knowledge is increased without limit! The objects of knowledge are infinite; and by the application of the powers in their best state to these, the mind must make great and continual growing acquisitions. It is easy to see that our present state was not intended principally for the acquisition of knowledge but of virtue. Our lives are short; our avocations and engagements about the necessary affairs of life, and the amusements, which are, in their place, not only innocent but necessary, for no one can bear a continued application of his powers even in waking hours, are manifold; and how many hours, to all the purposes of mental acquisitions, are lost in sleep? All these things shew, that this is not the state for acquiring great knowledge. Indeed, if nothing else

were

were to prevent it, few, comparatively few have the means and opportunities; but we are allowed to hope for a ſtate in which the natural and generous deſires after knowledge, ſhall be abundantly gratified; the powers of the mind ſurely will be then in the beſt eſtate: and ſuch engagements of them as we find neceſſary in this world, and which are frequent unavoidable avocations from the purſuit of knowledge, will have no more place. The application of ſuch powers, without ſuch interruptions as we muſt ſubmit to in this world, promiſeth great things. And it is not to be imagined, that tho' there may be a difference in the meaſure of abilities and capacity, even in the beſt ſtate; it is not to be imagined, I ſay, that any one among the perfect ſhall find reaſon to complain of a ſcanty meaſure; or that he finds himſelf in this reſpect unfortunate. It hath been obſerved by many, as a probable thing, that our minds in their original frame are much alike; and that the great diverſity we ſee in the temper, in the affections, and likewiſe in the meaſure of our abilities, may be in a great meaſure owing to the different complexion and conſtitution of our bodies: Some have argued this matter very plauſibly: And if it be ſo; when the ſoul is diſmiſſed from the body, we may hope that it will be ſet free from all diſadvantage

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or

SERM. VII. or misfortune with respect to the powers of the mind; and surely no man will imagine that the resurrection of the body, and the reunion of the soul to it, will bring any of these disadvantages, which are now complain'd of, along with them. We may then assuredly rest in the first persuasion, that in the world above there shall be no complaints about the powers and abilities of the mind, more than about any thing else. And however men, who have no taste for knowledge, may put no great value upon this; yet to persons who have a proper relish for, and that thirst after knowledge, which is so natural, it will appear a very high thing.

Thirdly, It will be evident to all who attend to these matters, that we have, properly speaking, no power over our own understandings and judgments with respect to truth and falsehood; these must be determined by evidence. If a thing appeareth to the mind evidently true, it is absolutely impossible to withhold our assent. If it appeareth evidently false, we cannot possibly give our assent. This is apparent in all things which are called self-evident, and in numberless propositions, especially with respect to numbers and lines; truths of that kind no man, when they are proposed to his mind, finds it in his power to deny, or even to doubt of; this

this is obvious. But what ought to be particularly attended to, is, that this paſſiveneſs of the underſtanding runs through all the degrees of evidence, down to the loweſt probability. For the ſame reaſon that we find it impoſſible to reſiſt the force of a ſelf-evident truth, but muſt pronounce it certain, we cannot reſiſt that evidence which appears for a probability; it muſt even to the mind appear probable. Thus the underſtanding was intended as a mirror, by which things were to be repreſented as they are; and we have in this reſpect no power over it. The conſequence of this is, that in the mere aſſent or diſſent of the mind, as evidence appeareth to it, there can be neither virtue nor vice: it is really a neceſſary thing, in which the mind is intirely paſſive. Who, for example, thinks it virtuous in any man to believe his own exiſtence? Who thinks there is virtue in aſſenting to demonſtrations in lines and numbers? And, as hath been ſaid, this neceſſity of aſſent or diſſent deſcendeth to the loweſt probability, ſo far as evidence appeareth to the mind. But, on the other hand, it cannot be denied, that men are juſtly accounted culpable for holding ſome opinions, and are to be commended for holding of others; eſpecially when theſe opinions affect the moral ſtate and conduct. It is in this reſpect. we

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have

SERM. VII. have in ſcripture ſo much aſcribed to faith; and unbelief is repreſented as a thing ſo fatal. Whence then can ariſe the virtue of aſſent to truth, or the vice and fault of not believing it, if in mere aſſent or diſſent, conſidered as ſuch, there is neither virtue nor vice? The anſwer to this is clear. Men may not give their aſſent to truth, where yet the evidence is ſtrong and convincing, becauſe they are negligent, and will not be at pains to enquire into it; even when it concerneth them highly. This muſt be accounted very blameable; and we ſee that inquiry into the evidences of truth is a part, and a momentous one it is, of the diſcipline of our preſent ſtate. Several truths of great importance to us, and of which the evidence, when we have inquired into it, is ſtrong and cogent, yet do not force themſelves upon the mind, as ſome ſelf-evident matters do: There is need of inquiry, and of the application of the powers to that end. And, ſurely, where perſons reject the truth, merely becauſe they have neglected to inquire into the evidences of it, this muſt be culpable in the ſight of God.

Secondly, When the mind hath been perverted by vicious prejudices, and hath contracted an enmity againſt the truth, in this caſe, no apology is to be made. Here the fault is not in the underſtanding, properly ſpeaking,

ſpeaking, but in the will and the heart. There may be ſuch a degree of prejudice indeed, as rendereth the mind in a manner incapable of diſcerning and judging. Still worſe is the caſe, when the luſts of men have made them enemies to the truth. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil.* John iii. 19. And ſo we ſee, notwithſtanding the paſſiveneſs of the mind in its aſſent or diſſent, yet there may be much virtue in our believing, and much guilt in unbelief. But when men have laboured with themſelves to judge impartially, and have uſed all reaſonable diligence in inquiring into the evidence of important truth, then their ſincerity will be accepted of God; and ſurely, thoſe errors which are manifeſtly involuntary, and which are conſiſtent with integrity of heart, ſhall not be imputed to them for their condemnation,

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SERMON VIII.

Of the Will, of Liberty, and particularly of moral Liberty.

MATTHEW XVI. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own Soul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Soul?

I Propoſed, by way of introduction to what is principally intended in theſe words of our Saviour, to conſider the nature and faculties of the human ſoul, from which the great excellency of it will appear. In the former diſcourſe, I endeavoured to ſhew that it is an immaterial ſubſtance, capable of acting, and of fruition, independent of body.

I like-

I likewiſe entered upon the conſideration of the faculties of it; and treated particularly concerning the underſtanding, and the operations of it, and concluded with ſome practical obſervations. The other great faculty is the *will*, which ſhall be the ſubject of the preſent diſcourſe. SERM. VIII.

What the *will* is needeth no explanation. Every one knows it, and the determination of the mind to act or not to act, which is ſignified by this familiar language, I will, or I will not. And we all know that upon this determination of the mind, or volition, our actions follow; which upon this account only, are our own actions, ſpringing from our own choice, and volition, as the immediate cauſe of them. No man but perfectly knows the difference between being conſtrained to do a thing, which therefore is never imputed to him; and acting from will, and choice, which therefore is imputed to him. This freedom, therefore, of acting, or which is the ſame thing, this acting from volition, as the ſole cauſe, is the foundation of all moral agency, of all moral good and evil, and of all moral character. But here the grand inquiry is, is the *will* free? Or, for indeed this is an expreſſion ſcarcely proper, is the mind free in volition? I know no point which hath been more debated amongſt the learned than

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this: Some alledging ſtrongly that there is not, nor can be any ſuch thing, properly and ſtrictly ſpeaking, as freedom of will and choice; that our internal ſenſations, upon which this opinion, that we are properly and ſtrictly ſpeaking free agents, is founded, are all deceptions; that all the determinations of our minds are in purſuance of motives operating upon the mind, which are effectual to produce them; that therefore the whole chain of action is linked together, ſo as to render the whole neceſſary; and that there is not, properly ſpeaking, any ſelf-determining principle in the ſoul. Others have with great earneſtneſs contended, that there is in the ſoul ſuch a ſelf-determining principle, and that this is the ſole foundation of all moral agency, of all good and evil, of all reward and puniſhment; all which ideas are loſt, if the *will* or mind is not properly free, and the ſole cauſe of voluntary action. I ſhall not enter into this controverſy, upon which many volumes have been written; and indeed very little to the improvement of mankind. In general, if we reflect upon our voluntary deliberate actions, we ſhall find that there is not one of them, but what hath been done in purſuance of ſome motive or other, influencing and determining the mind. This is a matter of which every man may be convinced

vinced by his own reflection; and taketh place in all things, in which there is not a perfect indifferency, and which therefore cannot be of the leaſt moment in human life. On the other hand, it is certain that nature directeth every man to aſcribe to himſelf all his own actions, as the immediate cauſe of them; and that this is the conſtant language of conſcience, with reſpect to our good or our bad actions, approving and commending the one, and diſapproving and condemning the other. Upon this, likewiſe, are all praiſe and blame from others, who are witneſſes to our actions, founded, and all rewards and puniſhments. Were our actions neceſſary, none of theſe things would have any place. And ſo let men argue as they will, as mankind have always proceeded in their judgments concerning actions, whether their own or thoſe of others, as having been free, and the effects of volition; I ſay as they have proceeded upon the foundation from the beginning of time, ſo they will proceed to the end of it. Here we muſt reſt; conſcience will always bear the ſame teſtimony, and men will always praiſe and blame as they have done. And as it is manifeſt that any thing which can be called force is utterly inconſiſtent with choice, no two ideas are indeed more contradictory; ſo we ſee in things which are per-

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SERM. VIII. fectly indifferent, and where there can be no motive for acting one way rather than another, that yet men act; this cannot but give us the idea of a ſelf-determining principle, and prepares us to embrace the notion of freedom, as the moſt natural. As to the conſiſtency of it with a perfect preſcience of future events, which are the reſult of human free agency, and therefore cannot be ſuppoſed to be aſcertained; this is a matter into which I ſhall not enter. It is perhaps a thing too high for the human mind, and perhaps always will be ſo. We know that God doth actually foreſee ſuch events; and yet we at the ſame time feel ourſelves free agents. But I haſten through theſe things, as of leſs moment to us, that we may turn our thoughts to what is entertaining and uſeful.

And Firſt, it is by this faculty of the will, thus free, that a man may be ſaid to have dominion over himſelf and his own actions; and a noble and honourable dominion it is, very extenſive, and in which he is abſolutely independent of the whole creation. He is liable to no force, conſtrained he may be to do, or to ſuffer, if he will not do, what is required by the ſuperior power; but over his will and choice, and the determinations of his mind, there is no power of any creature. In this he is ſole poſſeſſor and lord:

ſord: and this maketh his own actions in ſuch a manner his own, that no one elſe can have any ſhare in them as the cauſe. They may be ſaid to be of all things moſt his property, and of which he can in no caſe and by no enemy be deprived. And this ſelf dominion is the ſame in all men, in all ſtations and circumſtances. The very pooreſt and moſt obſcure are equally poſſeſſed of it, with the richeſt and moſt honourable. As we cannot but have the notion of ſomething great in this, ſo the vaſt importance of it appeareth from the conſequences. All praiſe and honour, all ſelf-applauſe and approbation, ſpring from, or may be ſaid to be founded upon it: and theſe are in truth the moſt valuable acquiſitions and enjoyments of human life. There is nothing equal to having acted well. How ſweet the entertainment which an approving conſcience giveth to the mind! And how abſolutely independent of all created power! How great that joy in all circumſtances! This is the main thing. He is a happy man who is pleaſed with his own actions; that is, rationally pleaſed, and upon the teſtimony of an enlightened as well as an approving conſcience. And how pleaſing that honour from others, which is the concomitant of ſubſtantial virtue! I may ſay, the reflected luſtre of it; that honour from

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SERM. VIII. good judges among mankind, but especially from the superior orders of being; but above all from the Supreme Being! And how is the heart raised with the expectation of reward! Such reward as infinite goodness and a mind infinitely liberal, directing an hand infinitely powerful, will confer. All this is indeed riches; and the independency of it is what I would have principally noticed. No power on earth can have any influence whatsoever upon it, to lessen or interrupt the fruition of it. We see then it was a noble possession, I may say a noble kingdom, our Maker bestowed upon us when he gave us to be free agents and the voluntary subjects of his kingdom. It is very true, by so framing and endowing us, he has made our state obnoxious to great misery; the very greatest; to the painful condemnation of our consciences, to shame and infamy, and to all those grievous punishments, which the justice of God hath threatened to inflict upon the workers of iniquity. But this seemeth to be the unavoidable consequence of freedom. Whoever is capable of virtue, must also be liable to vice and evil, if he is a limited and finite creature. That we are liable to such great miscarriage, and to be made so miserable by it, is indeed the strongest of all reasons, why we should put on the firmest resolutions of

doing

doing our duty, of resisting all temptations to sin, and of watching over ourselves, and our whole conduct, with the greatest exactness; but is no proof at all, that a capacity of acting from free choice and from volition, is not a very noble and excellent endowment; which unquestionably it is. Indeed there needs no more, no other proof of this, than that, without such a power, we could not have been at all capable of virtue; and what would human nature be in such a state, or how preferable to the brutes which perish? Surely, that power, which rendereth us moral agents, is our noblest distinction; and we have still reason to rejoice in it, and in that dominion in ourselves which our Maker hath given us. This will appear further when it is considered, in the second place, SERM. VIII.

How precious all men account it, to be able to act according to their own choice, the dictates of their own minds, and what they themselves *will*; free from all restraint and compulsion by others! And how hardly they brook a state of servitude, in which they are not governed by their own determination, but are obliged to submit to that of others! When their most rational and approvable desires and inclinations must be thwarted, and give way to the tyrannical commands of such as have obtained power over them. As there is nothing that men

SERM. VIII. men of the worthieſt and moſt generous minds eſteem more than liberty; ſo there is nothing they can worſe bear than ſervitude, and a ſtate of abſolute ſubmiſſion to the will of their fellow creatures. Liberty ſeems to be the natural right, it may be called the birth-right, of every man: and undoubtedly our maker, who hath endowed us with free-wills, and a power of acting from choice, intended we ſhould be free; and in our very frame hath declared this intention. And they who enthrall and enſlave others without cauſe, that is, without their having done any thing by which they have forfeited their liberty, are chargeable with a moſt outrageous violation of the rights of humanity. But, I ſay, from the uneaſineſs and diſtreſs, which all men feel in a ſtate of ſervitude, we ſee what a valuable thing liberty is. Civil liberty hath often been an object ſo dear to men, that they have counted it right, virtuous and honourable, to hazard life in the defence of it; and many have made a ſacrifice of life rather than give it up, as counting life not worth the holding without it. Indeed, it cannot be imagined, that any truly generous and worthy mind will not be in this way of thinking. And as in the preſent ſtate of human nature, there muſt be public civil ſocieties, and civil conſtitutions; ſo how precious is the priviledge of living under ſuch a conſtitution

tution as preſerveth liberty from invaſion! In which men are in this reſpect no ways abridged, farther than as certain branches of their liberty were given up voluntarily, in framing the conſtitution; and in which, thoſe reſolutions which were voluntarily formed for the good of the whole body, become the ſtanding laws and rules of conduct. So that men, amenable to theſe laws, have in all other reſpects their full liberty, and are not obnoxious to the will of any tyrant, or to be haraſſed as his capricious humour, his cruelty, or his avarice ſhall prompt him. No poſſeſſion in this world is ſo valuable as ſuch liberty. And if civil liberty is a thing ſo valuable, what value is to be put upon religious liberty, and mens being able to act, in all matters of religion, according to the dictates of their own conſciences, and none to make them afraid! And how injurious are they to their neighbours, who having got power into their hands, enſlave them in matters of religion, and trample upon the unalienable rights of conſcience; forcing men to act againſt the dictates of it, or to ſuffer moſt grievouſly even to the death! Laying men under ſuch ſervitude as this, is not only a violation of the natural rights of mankind, but is an outrageous oppoſition to that dominion over conſcience, which belongeth only to God. He alone is lord of conſci-

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ence;

SERM. VIII. ence; and as in all matters of conſcience, he hath made us abſolutely dependent upon himſelf, ſo by that very appointment he muſt have made us abſolutely independent of all others. To him as our maſter we ſtand or fall, and as we are to obey his commands and do his will without reſerve, ſo it is impoſſible we ſhould be under any obligation to obey the commands of any power upon earth, in oppoſition to his; and we are indiſpenſably obliged to ſuffer any thing that can be inflicted upon us in this world, rather than obey ſuch commands. But how precious muſt religious liberty be to a good mind! And how pleaſing to a good man that he is in a ſtate in which he may purſue the dictates of his own conſcience in peace, and with ſafety to his life and property! How great the obligations all who enjoy ſuch liberty are under to the providence of God; and how carefully doth it become them to improve it! How often hath it been the lot of mankind, of how many is it the diſmal lot at this day, that they cannot ſatisfy the obligations of conſcience without incurring the moſt grievous civil penalties, and the deepeſt ſufferings in their perſons and eſtates! It is not ſo with us. May we be duly thankful to our maker; and to the beſt ends, the great ends of religion, improve theſe happy days we enjoy.

But

But what I would moſt of all inſiſt upon is, in the third place, that it was intended the *will* ſhould be always under the conduct of reaſon and of conſcience, and that we ſhould chooſe nothing, determine nothing, do nothing but what is agreeable to theſe. To do any action of importance, merely becauſe one will do it, and for no other reaſon, is indeed very low and unworthy of human nature; and diſcovereth a moſt diſagreeable perverſeneſs of ſpirit, and cannot but be extremely hurtful. For a reaſonable creature not to act a rational part, is moſt unnatural; and for a creature endowed with conſcience, not to act a conſcientious part, is impious. And as acting from meer will and caprice is very unnatural, ſo it muſt be followed with moſt hurtful conſequences to a man's own intereſt, as well as to the world about him. Such ſelf-will has no ſecurity againſt falling into the greateſt miſchiefs; whatever vain imagination, whatever whim takes poſſeſſion, muſt be executed, however pernicious it may be. The truth is, there is in the thing itſelf ſomething very ungracious to ſociety, and which muſt render a perſon extremely unacceptable; but this is not the worſt of it, for where reaſon and conſcience have not the direction; and every thing, to which a perſon is at preſent inclined, ſo far as he hath power, muſt be done; his neighbours SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII. neighbours are like to ſuffer deeply by him. If his inclinations are harmleſs, it is well; but if they are miſchievous, they muſt be gratified; and rather than ſuch obſtinacy ſhould be thwarted, all muſt give way, and all muſt ſuffer. When ſuch an obſtinate ſpirit getteth into high ſtation, it is what all muſt dread; and we ſee, in numberleſs inſtances, the world hath ſuffered deeply by it. There is ſomething perfectly ſhocking in that obſtinacy which nothing can work upon, and which, contrary to the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt reaſon, will do things meerly becauſe it hath determined to do them.

But what I principally aimed at under this head, is, to recommend that liberty by which a perſon is made free from ſervitude to himſelf, as well as from ſervitude to others; and by which he is prepared to act always in purſuance of the dictates of cool reaſon and of his conſcience. This, for diſtinction ſake, may be called moral liberty; as that which conſiſts in chooſing and acting according to choice, be it good or evil, right or wrong, may be called natural liberty; this is eſſential to our frame, I mean, ſo far as will and choice go; the other, is a virtuous acquiſition. Of the former we cannot be deprived while we remain men; but many are ſeen to be without the latter. For explaining of this, it may be obſerved, that beſides the ſuperior

powers of reaſon and conſcience, it was neceſ- SERM.
ſary to our frame and ſtate, that we ſhould VIII.
have many various appetites planted in us,
ſuch as hunger and thirſt, and a deſire of be-
ing poſſeſſed of ſo much of the goods of the
world as will ſatisfy theſe demands; ſuch
again are the deſires of eaſe, and of pleaſures
of various kinds, and therefore of honour and
diſtinction; and of many other things which
might be named, reſpecting ourſelves and
others. Now, it is perfectly apparent, that
without ſuch particular appetites planted in us,
the great ends of life would not be anſwered;
it appeareth at the ſame time equally evident,
that theſe appetites cannot anſwer the end,
without being under direction and govern-
ment; for when they are not, they are ſeen,
in numberleſs inſtances, to be pernicious and
deſtructive to the natural conſtitution, as well
as to the conſcience. Now, the direction they
were intended to be under, is that of reaſon,
or prudence, and conſcience; which were
placed in our frame, as controling powers, to
reſtrain appetite, in every inſtance, in which
the gratification of it would be hurtful to the
conſtitution and general ſtate, or break in upon
the rights of conſcience. In this reſpect, there
is a moſt remarkable difference between the
human and the brute kind. In this laſt, the
appetites have various reſtraints put upon them

SERM. VIII. by nature itſelf, and limits, which they diſcover no inclination to tranſgreſs. But in the human kind, is it not ſo; for having reaſon and conſcience given them, theſe are to reſtrain deſire and inclination, where they tend to evil; and therefore they have not ſuch limits ſet to them by nature as the brutal orders have. But now the conſequence of this is, that where reaſon and conſcience are not applied to regulate and reſtrain them, they are apt to become exorbitant; and ſo not to help, but moſt ſenſibly to hurt nature, and defeat the ends of it; which they are often ſeen to do. This is the infirmity and imperfection of our preſent ſtate. And not ſeldom doth deſire become ſo ſtrong and exorbitant, that it bids defiance to all that reaſon and conſcience can offer againſt the gratification of it. Very various are the luſts and appetites which are planted in the heart of man, ſummed up by the apoſtle John under *the luſts of the eye, the luſts of the fleſh, and the pride of life*. Any of theſe which hath the uncontroled government of the man, muſt ruin his moſt valuable intereſts. Some perſons by their natural complexion and conſtitution, or by their circumſtances and ſtate, are more ſubjected to one kind of them, and ſome to another; and ſome of them are more pernicious in their tendencies than others; but very few inſtances, I believe, are found, in

which one or other doth not endanger men, and need very ſtrong efforts of reaſon and of the moral powers to reſtrain and keep them under proper direction, both with reſpect to the meaſure and the end of them. Now, when any of theſe luſts are grown to ſuch an unnatural ſtrength, as not to admit of direction and reſtraint, then indeed men have loſt their liberty, and are enſlaved in the worſt ſenſe of that word. What can be a more unnatural and deſpicable ſtate, than for a perſon to ſee what is right and fit, what would be really for his intereſt and happineſs, to be thoroughly convinced of this, and even have a deſire to purſue it, and yet not have it in his power to do ſo; not from any mere natural incapacity, but that which is moral and contracted, an exorbitant luſt having got the dominion, and exerciſing it in the moſt imperious and tyrannical manner? He ſees what is right, he approves it, but does what is wrong. Conſcience and reaſon call aloud to him to deſiſt; he will not, it may be ſaid, he cannot; for indeed in that ſtate of his mind he cannot; and thus as *Solomon* ſpeaketh, *Prov.* vii. 22. He goes *as an ox to the ſlaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the ſtocks, and knoweth not till a dart ſtrike through his liver*; till he is undone and loſt. In this ſtate a perſon is a ſlave to himſelf, that is, to his own luſts; and this SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII. the holy ſcriptures call ſervitude. So our Saviour ſaith, John viii. 34. *He who committeth ſin is the ſervant of ſin.* And the Apoſtle *Paul* ſpeaketh, Titus iii. 3. *of ſerving*, or being in ſervitude to, *divers luſts and pleaſures.* It muſt be owned that of all bondage this is the moſt unnatural and infamous; in which a perſon muſt be a continual reproach to himſelf: And while he is labouring under the yoke in the hardeſt of all bondage, muſt know that this is voluntary: And thus to all his other ſufferings muſt be added the condemnation of his own heart. Look into any kind of bondage to which the body can be ſubjected, to labouring in the mines, or at the oar, through the whole of an unfortunate life; yet while the ſoul is free, the man may be ſaid to be free; and to be capable of moſt generous ſentiments, and of ſome enjoyment of being: But when the very ſoul is enſlaved, there cannot be ſaid to be the leaſt ſhadow of liberty; the nobleſt ſentiments muſt be baniſhed, and all the tendencies of the ſoul towards the higheſt dignity of nature thwarted and ſuppreſſed. And it is known, that the longer ſuch tyranny prevails in the mind, it becometh not only more rigorous in its exactions, but more confirmed and eſtabliſhed; the chains grow ſtronger and ſtronger, ſo that all proſpect of liberty is loſt. But how

how miſerable the caſe when men are, contrary to reaſon and conſcience, dragged into actions, which not only they ſee muſt ruin their ſtate hereafter, which is indeed a proſpect more diſtant, but even when they ſee the preſent unavoidable hurt and ruin of their ſtate in this world; ſee it and confeſs it, but appear incapable of avoiding the rock on which their vices drive them, and on which they are to be daſhed to pieces. If any thing could be more miſerable and more infamous, it is, when the tyranny of deſire and inclination continueth, even when men have outlived all the capacities, or are cut off from all opportunity of gratification; human nature cannot appear in any other light equally opprobrious. But the very mention of this is enough. SERM. VIII.

O! How bleſſed on the other hand, is moral liberty! When nature is in a proper ſtate, when there is that ſubornation of the lower affections and appetites, in which the beauty of it conſiſteth, and upon which the tranquillity of it dependeth; in which, reaſon and conſcience have the government of the man; in which, theſe are always conſulted and their dictates ſubmitted to; in which, paſſions, ſtanding in oppoſition to them, are reſolutely ſuppreſſed and quelled; in which, as the Apoſtle ſpeaketh, there is no *conferring with*

Sect. VIII. *flesh and blood!* Here no desire is to be gratified, till it hath justified itself at the bar of reason, and approved itself to conscience; no matter how earnest it may be, it must yield, and submit to the dictates of the superior powers; the dignity of the man is asserted in opposition to it, and layeth on an effectual restraint: And in all conflicts between the flesh and the spirit, the latter is victorious. What tranquillity and blessed peace must reign in the soul so regulated and attempered! What joy doth conscience minister, when it hath thus the uncontrolable dominion; and in what safe paths will it lead men! How comfortable the reflections upon such a state and conduct! How elevating the hopes it giveth! How open and frank the countenance! How undaunted doth it render the spirit! Let us put all the gratifications which the objects of vitious desire can give, let us put them all together, and in comparison of this they are nothing. And it is carefully to be attended to here, that when the various desires are kept under proper discipline, they by degrees cease to be impetuous and exorbitant. Habitual indulgence doth greatly strengthen them, and it is by accustomed gratification that they become most ungovernable; but by abstinence and discipline they are greatly weakened, and made amenable to those

those laws which nature hath prescribed. So that as the power of conscience is strengthened, at the same time it's work, or, if you please, it's task, is the easier; for besides the natural tendency of this discipline to strengthen the one, and weaken the other; there is a taste begotten and confirmed for the noblest sort of gratifications, namely, for those pleasures which are annexed to the practice of religion and virtue; and where that taste has once obtained in its proper strength and delicacy, the difficulty is in a great measure over: Then inclination will be brought over to the party of conscience; and when men have once got possession of a good, which not only reason, but their own sensations pronounce to be greater than any sinful gratification, they will not easily part with it, for the sake of any other. This is a state truly honourable and truly happy; and what we ought ever to think of and aspire after, as the most excellent acquisition of which human nature is in this state capable. Should we labour all our days for it, with as great eagerness and severity to ourselves, as ever any creature laboured to acquire a fortune, or to satisfy his ambitious desires, we should find the acquisition a glorious reward; but this is not the case. It is far more easily attainable; and there wanteth but inclination

SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII. and resolution to ensure it. The natural capacity is given to every man, and the additional aid which is necessary, will never be wanting to those who sincerely seek it.

Upon the whole, as creatures endowed with moral powers, and with liberty, we are capable of attaining to very great happiness, or of sinking into a very low state of misery. This constitution we cannot alter, it would be impious to desire it. But we may by the grace of God so improve it, as to have eternal glory and happiness entailed upon us.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Of the Affections, their nature, arrangement in the heart, and operations as ſprings of action.

MATTHEW XVI. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own Soul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Soul?

HAVING propoſed to diſcourſe upon the powers and faculties of the human ſoul, with a view of ſhewing the worth and excellency of it; and having treated of the underſtanding and the will, and made ſeveral reflections upon them of a practical tendency; on the preſent occa-

SERM. IX. sion, I proceed to consider the affections; which may indeed be called the salt of life, which without them would be joyless and insipid. I shall therefore consider the nature of the affections, the arrangement of them in the heart, and the operations of them as springs of action, and of enjoyment; and in prosecuting this subject, there will be occasion of mentioning many things which shew the wisdom and goodness of our Maker, and that the frame of the human mind is indeed curious and excellent. These things I shall endeavour to lay before you, in so plain a manner, that every one who giveth any attention to what passeth in his own mind, may easily comprehend them.

What an affection or passion is, is to be known by feeling, rather than by definition. All know what desire and aversion, what joy and grief, what fear and anger are. All know the manner in which these passions affect the mind, and the various tendencies of them; and likewise that variety in the measure and degree of strength with which they operate. Sometimes, and in some constitutions, they appear to be so strong and inflamed, as to fill the mind with tumult and confusion; at other times they operate with greater calmness, yet with sufficient strength to answer the purposes of them, without causing any painful per-

perturbation in the mind. To prevent ſuch perturbation, is the province of wiſdom; but not to root out the paſſions, which is a thing that cannot be done, nor is it our duty to attempt it. The philoſophy which pretended to this, and that the wiſe or perfect man, was to be void of paſſions, was indeed very abſurd: But it is probable, the language uſed by it, might be in ſome inſtances miſtaken, and that thoſe celebrated teachers of the Gentile world meant no more, than that the wiſe man was to be free from all internal tumult by paſſion, from all diſtreſſing and painful ſenſations, in a word, from all exorbitancy. However, what remains to be ſaid farther concerning the nature and energy of the paſſions, will naturally occur, as we come to ſpeak more particularly concerning them. SECT. IX.

I proceed now to conſider the arrangement of the affections. The principal diſtinction, which maketh two great claſſes of them, is, into thoſe, of which our own private and perſonal good is the object, and thoſe, that have for their object and ultimate end, the good and happineſs of others; in other words, they may be all claſſed under ſelf-love, and good-will. Some, indeed, ſeem to queſtion, whether they may not all be reduced to ſelf-love, working in its various ways, and for its various purpoſes; and whether there be any

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Sect. IX. such thing as disinterested good-will or benevolence, the ultimate end of which, and that in which the affection resteth, is, the good and happiness of others. But this is indeed to ask, whether there be any such thing as good-will at all; as to speak of interested good-will, is a plain contradiction in terms; for so far as we mean our own personal interest in an action, so far we cannot mean that of our neighbour; and so far as we intend the interest and happiness of our neighbour, we cannot intend that of our own. Here the principles and the ends of action are intirely distinct.

Now, whether there be real good-will in the heart, one should think should be a matter of feeling; and that to this the appeal should be made. If any person shall say that he has not now, and that he is not conscious to himself that he ever had, any desire of the happiness of others, or any kind wishes towards them; I know nothing which is to be said to him upon the argument; it would be hard to prove to a man that he hath an affection in his soul, which he himself never felt there, and of which he has no consciousness. But if there is really such a character in the world, how must it appear? Who would like to assume it, or who would wish to be known by it? I shall, therefore, take

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it for granted, that there is ſuch a thing as diſintereſted good-will to be found in the heart of man. The truth is, there are many of our actions, to which we are excited by a combination of very different affections. Sometimes, indeed it is very often the caſe, that in doing good to others, we promote our own intereſt; nay, from the aſſurance of a future reward, it may be ſaid that we always do: So that we may be prompted to do a good and kind action to others, from regard to ourſelves, as well as good-will to them. A regard to honour, and name, and reputation, may co-operate in ſuch actions, ſometimes almoſt imperceptibly to ourſelves; and in ſome inſtances, hypocrites pretend to act with good-will to others, when they mean their own private intereſt, and that only: Such was the caſe of the Phariſees, who did their alms in the moſt ſhowy manner, and that they might be ſeen of men. But from theſe inſtances we muſt not conclude, that there is no ſuch thing as diſintereſted good-will in the human heart. We are therefore to conſider the various paſſions and affections which are planted in the heart, as claſſed under two heads, namely, ſelf-love, and good-will; or the love of ourſelves, and the love of others. SERM. IX.

Thoſe which are arranged under the head of ſelf-love, and that miniſter to it, are either

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SERM. IX. such as immediately and directly tend to our preservation or defence from evil, or to procure good and happiness. For example, fear and anger are intended, the one to make us avoid danger, and the other to restrain such as are disposed to injure us, from an apprehension of suffering by our anger and resentment; and to prompt the immediate exertion of our power in her own defence. Others tend directly to procure good and happiness, such as the appetites of hunger and thirst, which are planted in animal nature, common to us with the brutal orders; and such are those desires which may be more properly called human, as the desire of pleasure, the desire of knowledge, of riches, and of honour. I hope you will bear with what may seem to some less fit to be the subject of such a discourse, till I point out particularly how these affections are arranged in the heart, and what place our Maker intended each of them should hold; for in this order there is wondrous contrivance, and wondrous beauty; and the more we attend to it, the more we shall be prepared to adore and celebrate our Maker.

There is, in the mind, a calm and deliberate regard to our own good and happiness, to which all the particular passions of the selfish kind, were intended to be subjected, and by

by which they were to be controled; a regard, which hath leſs of paſſion in it, and which is calm, and fixed, and invariably purſueth a perſon's own happineſs as the general ultimate end. This affection, I ſay, hath a controling and governing power, both over the paſſions which are intended as preſervatives from evil, and over thoſe, the direct tendency of which is to procure good. For example, fear prompteth a perſon to avoid danger; but when, upon deliberate attention to his own intereſt and good, he ſees it neceſſary to this end, that he ſhould encounter danger, then the voice of fear is no more to be regarded. In the ſame manner, when anger prompteth a man to exert his power in the retaliation of a real or apprehended injury or affront; if his deliberate thoughts convince him that doing ſo will be prejudicial to his true intereſt, a regard to that will reſtrain his anger; and he will not give way to the tumultuous efforts of it. This holds true likewiſe with regard to all thoſe particular paſſions, the tendency of which is to procure good and happineſs; theſe are all to be ſubjected to, and controled by, the general and leſs paſſionate regard to our true intereſt. So, hunger and thirſt, and a deſire of certain kinds of food or drink, may be very ſtrong, but if men ſee that the gratifying theſe appetites would be really hurtful to their health,

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health, a prudent and diſcreet regard to their own happineſs, will control them. Thus, what more generous and commendable than a deſire of attaining to knowledge; but if the labour neceſſary to this acquiſition ſhould threaten the conſtitution, or be inconſiſtent with other things neceſſary for the good and happineſs of the man, a calm attention to this, is to reſtrain that deſire however impetuous. Juſt ſo, a deſire of honour, of power, or of riches; if any of theſe, in the ardors and vehemencies of them, ſhould prompt to meaſures which are of hurtful tendency, and to actions by which the general ſtate might deeply ſuffer; the care of that muſt forbid purſuing what is thus hurtful, and lay prudent reſtraints upon theſe deſires. And ſo it is with reſpect to all thoſe inclinations and paſſions which were intended to miniſter to ſelf-love, and to the calm attention and regard to perſonal intereſt; theſe muſt be all ſubjected to this, and always will be ſo in well diſciplined minds. Our bleſſed Lord hath given us an inſtance of this in the paſſage where my text is, which is very remarkable, and will fully illuſtrate what I mean. What can be a ſtronger deſire in man than the love of life, of which all men are conſcious? Yet, in ſome caſes, it may be greatly to a man's loſs to preſerve life, and greatly to his advantage to give it up. *If*

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any man will come after me, let him deny him- SERM.
self, and take up his cross, and follow me. For IX.
whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and who-
soever will lose his life for my sake shall find it?
And he elsewhere tells his disciples, Luke xiv. 26. That *if they hated not their own lives*, as well as *father and mother, and wife and children*, that is, be willing to give them up in his cause, *they could not be his disciples.* The meaning is, that they had concernments to attend to, and take care of, that were of greater moment than mortal life; and that a prudent regard to true interest, that which is of eternal consequence, would determine them to give it up; in other words, self-love would so determine them, for by this they should be infinite gainers.

But then farther, as all the particular passions and affections of the selfish and private kind, were intended to be subjected to, and controled by a calm prudential regard to our own interest and well being in general; so we shall observe, if we attend to it, that of those affections which were to be so subjected, some hold a higher place and station in the human frame than others; and have accordingly a controling power over those that are beneath them. What I mean will clearly appear by giving a few instances. The desire of ease and sensual pleasure, is perhaps the very low-

IX. Serm. eſt in our nature; now, this is not only ſubjected to, and to be controled by the ſupreme private affection, that is, calm ſelf-love, and deliberate attention to our own intereſt; but is under the control likewiſe of others. If an appetite for pleaſure ſhould be ſo indulged as to ſpoil the taſte for the acquiſition of knowledge, or of wealth, ſo far as that is neceſſary for a perſon's comfortable ſubſiſtence; in a right conſtituted mind it muſt give way to theſe laſt mentioned deſires, which are higher or more important: Much more muſt it give way, if a juſt regard to the preſerving of health forbiddeth the gratification of it. Thus alſo, the deſire of acquiring wealth, if it prompts to what would be injurious to health, or to reputation and credit, the deſire of theſe, which are ſtronger in well diſciplined mind, muſt control it. In this manner, as the paſſions hold an higher place in our frame, in a right ſtate of the mind, they have proportionable influence and power of controling thoſe which are beneath them: And ſo it cometh to paſs, that over the lower paſſions, which are always the moſt impetuous, there is a variety of reſtraining and controling powers. It is alſo very obſervable, that thoſe paſſions which have the greateſt impetuoſity and warmth, as incentives to action, yet in a right conſtituted mind, have not ſuch power as af-

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which are much calmer, and raiſe no ſuch tumult in the ſoul. The deſire of the higher mental acquiſitions raiſes no ſuch tumult, nor ſhews ſuch ardor and impetuoſity, as the deſire of ſenſual pleaſure; yet it is found to have more power, and to govern and reſtrain the other. The deſire of enjoying peace and living in friendſhip with our neighbours, has no ſuch ſenſible emotion in it as anger and reſentment; yet it is ſeen to prevail over anger, and to be able to curb it. In general, as the loweſt, which are like to be the moſt impetuous paſſions, and the warmeſt incentives to action, were intended to be under the influence and government of thoſe which are calmer, but in an higher ſtation; ſo it is evident theſe laſt are more prevalent, and as they have more calmneſs, ſo they have more influence in directing the conduct. SECT. IX.

All that I have been now ſaying ſeems to be juſt, with reſpect to our original frame, and our Maker's intention in its contrivance; and will be found to be fact in well diſciplined minds. But it is well known, that in ſome inſtances, and characters, certain paſſions, whether it is owing to an unfortunate caſt in the original complexion, or to habit and long unreſtrained indulgence, grow to ſuch an exorbitancy, as to defy all reſtraint, and to govern the man intirely. Surely, however,

SERM. IX. this, which is the perverſion and corruption of it, ought not to be called nature; it is indeed a thing quite unnatural. Where nature is in its right ſtate, nothing can be more beautiful than the arrangement of the affections in it, from the higheſt to the loweſt: Never had the commander of a body of men in the field his officers and ſoldiers in better order; and in this order the harmony and beauty of human nature doth indeed conſiſt. When the influence of the ſeveral affections is proportioned to the ſtation and place they ſeverally hold in our frame, the whole compoſition appeareth moſt beautiful, and the purpoſes of life are peacefully and effectually ſerved.

The other claſs or order of the affections, are thoſe of which the good and happineſs of our neighbour is the object; and in which the affection reſteth, as its ultimate end. In this ſenſe, a good man may be ſaid to love his neighbour as himſelf. Self-love we know purſues after private happineſs as the end in which it reſteth; and ſincere love to our neighbours doth likewiſe reſt in their good, as its ultimate end; not propoſing to do good to them as a means of anſwering ſome private purpoſe, but really intending to ſerve them and their intereſt. To ſet this ſubject in the cleareſt light I can,

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It muſt be obſerved, in the firſt place, that God has planted in the heart a calm diſpoſition to do good, as we have opportunity, to all who are capable of receiving benefits or good from us; and hath annexed to this a moſt pleaſing ſatisfaction. Man was formed for doing good to man, and indeed to all creatures endowed with life and ſenſe, and to delight in it; and ſurely that mind muſt be wretchedly depraved, that can take pleaſure in doing evil. We cannot but find that a diſpoſition to do good, and our purſuing the tendencies of it, is always the object of our approbation; and doing evil is what we cannot but condemn. To do evil merely for the ſake of doing evil, were ſuch a thing really to be found, is the moſt unnatural thing imaginable, and ſetteth the agent in the worſt and the moſt hateful light. Now, to this calm general diſpoſition to do good, a great many affections which miniſter to it, are ſubordinate; ſuch are the love of our country, the love of a neighbourhood, the love of a family, and of our relations, the affection of parents to children, and of children to parents, the love of intimate and dear friends; ſuch are likewiſe the affections which are ſuited to the various circumſtances in which our neighbour is found; ſympathy with the afflicted and unhappy, and joy in

Sect. IX. the happineſs of the proſperous; and ſuch likewiſe are the diſpoſitions and determinations of the mind to the practice of thoſe particular virtues, which tend to the good of our neighbour; as the love and practice of juſtice, the love of truth, gratitude, generoſity in almſgiving, and ſuch things as theſe; which are virtues that miniſter to the good of others, and if they had not that tendency, would have had no exiſtence: The deſign of planting them in the heart, is evidently to be as ſo many land-marks to us, and to direct us into that conduct which will moſt aſſuredly tend to the good of our neighbour, and to produce peace and happineſs in the world. This is a very general view of the good affections, and of the ſubordination of the particular ones, and whoſe object is more confined, to the calm and diſpaſſionate diſpoſition to do good; which may be ſaid to be ſupreme in this order: And this ſubordination will be apparent to every one from our moſt familiar way of thinking and ſpeaking upon this ſubject. Aſk a perſon why he ſhould follow truth, and do juſtice; and he will immediately tell you, that without truth and juſtice the world could not ſtand, nor ſociety ſubſiſt; and that there could be nothing upon earth but miſery, the perſon of the ſtrongeſt arm doing whatſoever he would.

Ask

Ask why parents ſhould love their children Serm.
and take care of them, why children ſhould IX.
honour and obey their parents; he will immediately anſwer, becauſe of the ruinous effects and conſequences which muſt enſue, if theſe affections did not prevail in the world. Not only is he ſenſible of a beauty and decency in them, but is capable of diſcerning why they are made to appear ſo beautiful and decent; namely, becauſe they are fruitful of ſo much happineſs to the world. Which ſhews that they are all intended to miniſter to the great principle of goodneſs or goodwill, and conſequently, as will afterwards appear, muſt be controled by it.

In the next place, it is evident, that that diſpoſition, which God hath originally planted in the heart, to do good, as ſuch, muſt always embrace the greateſt good, that can be done: this admitteth no doubt. If men do good from a love of doing good, they will be ſure to do the greateſt good they can; and not to do the good which men have the capacity and opportunity of doing, ſhews a defect in the principle; that perſon cannot be under the power and direction of it, who doth not the beſt which is in his power. The conſequence of this muſt be, that where two deſigns, both good, interfere, ſo that both of them cannot be proſecuted, the leſſer good

SERM. IX. must always give way to the greater, and the more confined to that which is more extended; and in purſuing this meaſure, our hearts will always approve us.

But, in the next place, there is, in the original regulation of our affections, a very pleaſing inſtance of the wiſdom of our Maker, in that they are found to be warmeſt and moſt ardent, where we have the greateſt opportunity of doing good. For inſtance, towards thoſe who are joined to us in the relations of domeſtic life, or in tendor and intimate friendſhips, or in near and familiar neighbourhoods; here we can be very ſignificantly uſeful and ſerviceable; while we can do little but wiſh well to perſons who are at a great diſtance from us, and thereby in a manner quite out of the reach of our influence. Did the affections work with the ſame energy towards perſons at a great diſtance from us, that they do towards intimate friends and dear relations, this would not only anſwer no end, but it would really make men very unhappy. Suppoſe, for inſtance, they were to be affected by the misfortunes, or ſickneſs, or death, of abſolute ſtrangers, in the ſame manner that they are by thoſe of their near relations, who are perhaps the deſire of their eyes and the joy of their hearts, their ſtate muſt be very painful and miſerable indeed.

Or

Or ſuppoſing the affections were as ſtrong incentives to action, where there was no opportunity or capacity of doing good, as where there are both, this would be very inconvenient, and could be of no uſe. But ſo we ſee it is ordered, that the ardor of the affection is proportioned to the capacity and opportunity of purſuing the tendencies and purpoſes of it. SERM. IX.

But then thoſe affections which are the moſt ardent, as incentives to action, the objects of which are neareſt to us, and which lie within the narroweſt circle, yet, notwithſtanding their ardor, were not intended to be ſo powerful as thoſe which are more calm, and have a more extended object. Love, for example, to our country, is a much more powerful, becauſe a more highly approved principle of action, than love to near relations; and the preſent intereſt of the latter is to be neglected, when it is inconſiſtent with our ſatisfying the demands of the other; and ſo in a thouſand other caſes, the moſt ardent affection of the private kind was intended to give way to a more public good. Thus, however ſtrong the love of our country may be in a generous and well diſpoſed perſon, yet if he, which can indeed but very ſeldom happen, diſcerneth that ſomething is in his power, by which the human race may

SERM. IX. receive great advantage, though, in ſome reſpects, prejudicial to his country, goodneſs will determine him to do the greateſt and moſt extenſive good. And thus, in all caſes, the affections in a well diſpoſed mind will govern as principles of and incentives to action, not in proportion to the ardor of the feeling, but in proportion to the greatneſs and extenſiveneſs of the object.

It is but the ſame thing in other words, to ſay, that the ſupreme calm, and diſpaſſionate goodneſs was intended in our frame to be a controling and governing principle, to which all the lower ſocial affections were to be ſubordinate. So, for inſtance, ſympathy with a criminal might very ſtrongly incline his tender hearted judge to pardon him; but if he ſees that this will be an injury to the public, his regard to that, though more cool and diſpaſſionate, muſt over-rule his pity; and tho' with a faltering accent, and with tears in his eyes, he pronounces the ſentence; yet a juſt regard to the public, tho' calmer, and producing no ſuch agitation, obligeth him to pronounce it. One child of a family ſhall be perhaps the object of peculiar affection to a parent, and it may be without any ſubſtantial reaſon; but a regard to the family in general, in a diſcreet parent, will check and control that paſſionate affection,

and

and prevent its hurtful tendencies. And ſo, in numberleſs obvious inſtances, the ſuperior though calmer affections, were intended to controul the others; and though the former are leſs paſſionate, yet they are found to be more powerful; the one ſupreme principle or determination to do the greateſt good, though the calmeſt and moſt diſpaſſionate, is ſuperior to all; and is ſeen, in a well diſpoſed mind, to break through all oppoſition given by the inferior affections of the ſame claſs. SECT. IX.

Thus I have given you a very general view of the natural arrangement of the affections which are planted in the heart. A calm deliberate regard to our true perſonal intereſt, having in its train all the particular private affections that either tend to preſerve and defend us from evil, or to procure us good and happineſs; and, on the other hand, a calm diſpaſſionate regard to the good of others, having in its train the particular ſocial affections, which are all ſubordinate to it, and intended to be controled by it. Such are the love of our country, of our family, of our intimate friends; ſympathy with the afflicted, and all ſuch affections, which were evidently intended to miniſter to the purpoſes of the general calm and diſpaſſionate good-will. Thus the affections are placed in the heart of a man;

SERM. IX. a man; and you ſee how kind our Maker hath been in forming us in this manner. There is here an arrangement of the various principles of action, which is indeed beautiful and lovely; upon which, the more we reflect, the more we ſhall be pleaſed with it. And indeed, my principal view in giving you this detail of the powers of the mind, and of the principles of action, is to lead you into an admiration of our Maker's wiſdom and goodneſs. Theſe appear wonderful in the ſtructure of our bodies, and the ſeveral parts and members of them, and have been by many writers highly celebrated; but ſurely they are not leſs diſplayed in the frame and conſtitution of our minds, which is admirable; and appears, in a well diſciplined mind, with great beauty. But without ſuch diſcipline, and without maintaining order in them, and the neceſſary government, all becometh confuſion and miſery; and the fineſt compoſition and nobleſt ſtructure, appeareth as a deformed ruin. Very juſtly hath Solomon obſerved, Prov. xxv. 28. that *he who hath no rule over his own ſpirit, is like a city broken down and without walls*; a defenceleſs and deformed ruin, in which it is affliction and diſtreſs to make our abode. This is above all things to be attended to; there is not one affection or deſire which God hath planted in the

the heart of man but what is in itſelf good, and contributeth to the perfection of our frame, and indeed was neceſſary in our preſent ſtate; but whatever affection is not under government, and becometh irregular and exorbitant, cannot fail of producing miſchief. This holdeth true, even with reſpect to thoſe affections of the ſocial kind, which ſeem to be the moſt lovely, and to promiſe the greateſt happineſs, as the natural fruit of them: for example, tenderneſs of ſympathy, generoſity, activity in ſerving others; faithfulneſs to their intereſts, and ſuch affections, ſo lovely and beautiful, and ſo fruitful of good, yet when they are not under the direction of ſound ſenſe and of conſcience, they never fail of producing moſt miſchievous effects. SERM. IX.

SERMON

SERMON X.

Of Reaſon and Conſcience, their power over the affections, and particularly of the authority of Conſcience in directing the Conduct.

MATTHEW XVI. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own Soul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Soul?

IN treating of the powers and faculties of the human ſoul, with a view of ſhewing the original excellency of it, I have diſtinctly conſidered the underſtanding, the will, and the affections. Theſe laſt were the ſubject of the preceding diſcourſe, in which the nature

nature of them was conſidered; the diſtinc- SERM. tion of them into two claſſes; namely, ſuch X. as had the good of the individual for their object, and ſuch as pointed to the good of others, as their ultimate end. The former, arranged under a calm and deliberate deſire of our own happineſs, which hath a controling power over all the particular appetites and deſires of the ſelfiſh kind. The other, under a calm good-will, or cordial diſpoſition to promote the good of others, which was plainly intended to have the government of all the particular ſocial affections and paſſions. But I obſerved, that beſides this ſubordination of the affections, among themſelves, they were intended to be under the government of reaſon and conſcience; and this is what I ſhall, as ſhortly and clearly as I can, explain in the preſent diſcourſe.

And firſt, let us conſider, the power and influence of reaſon over the affections. I ſpeak of reaſon, now, in the ſtrict ſenſe of that word, as ſignifying that faculty, by which, having received the ideas of objects, we compare theſe ideas together, and judge concerning the agreement or diſagreement of them, or concerning truth and falſehood; and by which we can from principles evidently true, deduce conſequences by a great variety of ſteps, to the diſcovering of truths, that were not

SERM. X. not otherwiſe to be found out, greatly to the increaſe of our knowledge; that faculty in fine, by which our knowledge is applied to practice, and by which we are taught to uſe proper means for ſerving the various ends we have in view. This is what we call reaſon and underſtanding. Now, with reſpect to its power over the affections, it may be obſerved, in the firſt place, that reaſon cannot produce any affection in the heart, but is only to direct and regulate the affections it finds there. The affections are all originally planted in us by our Maker. And if we were ſuppoſed to be without them in our original frame, no reaſoning nor reflection could beget them; of which there needeth no other proof than this, that if they had not been planted in us by our Maker, we could not have had any idea of them at all, to reflect upon, or to be the ſubject of our reaſoning; no more than one born blind could have the idea of light and colours, or one born deaf of ſounds or muſic.

Secondly, Reaſon cannot point out to us an ultimate end. This is the buſineſs of the affections or heart. Reaſon directeth us to ſubordinate ends, which are the means of anſwering other ends; but the end which is ultimate, or which is the ſame thing, in which the mind reſts as what is deſired for itſelf, without reference to any thing farther, reaſon does

does not point out. This will be very plain to every one who attends to what paſſes in his own mind with reſpect to the purſuit of both private and public happineſs, and likewiſe with reſpect to what is right. Aſk a perſon why he ſhould labour for food and raiment, or any other valued acquiſition; and immediately he will tell you, the reaſon is, that he may render life eaſy and pleaſant to himſelf, and avoid evil and pain. Aſk him why he ſhould avoid pain, and ſeek after pleaſure; why, the plain reaſon is, that the one is good and the other evil: but why ſhould he ſeek to avoid evil and procure good? Here no reaſon is to be given, but that the one is evil and the other good, which plainly referreth us, not to mere reaſon, but to a ſenſe by which good and evil are diſcerned, and to an affection of the heart. Aſk, again, with reſpect to good will, why a perſon ſhould give alms to the poor? the reaſon is, that it will relieve the poor from painful and pinching neceſſity, from hunger or cold: but why ſhould the poor man be relieved from this neceſſity? The reaſon is, it is doing him good: but why ſhould we do him good? Here, without recurring to an ultimate feeling, no reaſon is to be given, but what muſt be taken from our own intereſt, either as our doing good to our neigh-

Sect. X.

Sect. X. neighbour will tend to promote our preſent intereſt, or that we expect a reward from our Maker; which is a reaſon that will be given very readily by many who think our own intereſt is all in all; but then it brings us back juſt where we were before; and when it is aſked why we ſhould promote our own intereſt, or procure good to ourſelves; the only anſwer is, that it is good; no other reaſon can be given. It is juſt the ſame thing with our doing that which is right. What the mind reſts in, and beyond which it cannot go, is, that it is right; which refers us plainly to a faculty by which right and wrong are diſcerned, and which is a power quite diſtinct from reaſon.

Thirdly, It is the province of reaſon to miniſter to the affections, in directing to, and finding out means to ſerve thoſe particular ends, towards which the affections point. This is the buſineſs of underſtanding or wiſdom.

Fourthly, Reaſon hath a very material influence upon the affections, in finding out and correcting the irregularities of them. For inſtance, if the deſire of pleaſure, or the deſire of gain, be vehement and exorbitant in the mind, ſo that objects more excellent are neglected; cool impartial reaſon upon compa-

riſon of theſe objects, will quickly diſcern the irregularity there muſt be in the vehemency with which the leſs excellent objects are purſued, and will direct the reſtraining of it within proper bounds. Again, if a ſubordinate end is purſued, ſo as to neglect the ultimate end it was intended to ſerve; reaſon is to obſerve this great error in the ſtate of the heart, and to correct it. Nay, ſometimes paſſions are ſo ſtrong, and deſire ſo vehement, as to defeat their own immediate purpoſe; thus, the love of pleaſure often purſueth its object with ſuch eagerneſs, as to produce pain and miſery inſtead of delight. Fear ſhall often prevail to ſuch a degree, that inſtead of applying the powers inſtantly for preſervation and defence, it ſhall debilitate them ſo, as to make them utterly incapable of any application. All theſe irregularities are to be obſerved and corrected by reaſon: and all muſt know by experience, what influence cool reflection and reaſoning hath in theſe caſes. Thus, anger and wrath, and indeed all the paſſions, were intended to be kept within proper bounds. And as the more exorbitant paſſions are to be reſtrained by the power of reaſon, ſo thoſe which are become too feeble and weak to anſwer the end of them in our frame, are to be ſtrengthened, and the influence of reaſon and think-

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Sect. X. ing may be very conſiderable this way. For though reaſon cannot create a paſſion, yet it may ſtrengthen it greatly, by ſetting the object in a proper light; by fixing the attention of the mind to it; and by reſtraining and ſuppreſſing any antagoniſt paſſion, by which it is oppoſed and born downe. And it is becauſe of the influence which in this manner we may have upon the affections, that the exerciſe of them becometh the ſubject of command, and becometh our duty. For the meaning of this is not, that we can by an act of our will, and at our own pleaſure, excite an affection in our ſouls, as we can move our hands or our feet: But the meaning is, that we ſhould do what is in our power to ſuppreſs and curb all paſſions which are ſet in oppoſition to thoſe which we are called to exerciſe, and uſe our beſt endeavours to encourage theſe laſt; when we have done this, we have done what is properly required of us as our duty; and we ſhall find it will not be without ſucceſs.

This leads to ſomething that it may be very proper to conſider here. In the holy ſcriptures we are aſſured, that for our works of good-will and charity we ſhall be rewarded, and by the ſervice we do to others, ſhall be great gainers ourſelves at the laſt. Now, this ſeemeth to take off the intention from doing

doing good, for the ſake of our neighbour, and making him happy, and to lay the principal ſtreſs upon the promoting of our own intereſt, and ſo to marr inſtead of helping the exerciſe of real good-will. But this difficulty immediately vaniſheth, when it is conſidered, that where this real good-will is not found, there is no reward to be expected. For if the principle is not in the heart, the promiſe of reward to the actions which ought to proceed from that principle, gives no title to it. But where the principle is ſound, we are in the right to encourage it by all proper conſiderations. Thus, for inſtance, when a man's mind ſuggeſteth to him a good action which is in his power; but which might involve him in difficulty and prove a preſent loſs, whereby he is tempted to drop the thoughts of it; why, when he ſets himſelf down to conſider, whether he ſhall purſue the tendencies of his good affection, or oppoſe them and quell it, he may eaſily ſee, that if he does purſue theſe tendencies in doing good, it will be no final loſs to him; for that his preſent loſs ſhall be compenſated; and that, therefore, there is reaſon to encourage the good affection, and to do the kind office to his neighbour upon which it puts him. Thus the force of the antagoniſt ſelfiſh affection is taken off, and he is en-

SERM. X.

SERM. X. couraged to go on in well-doing. In like manner, all the motives to do a good action, taken from honour and reputation, nay, from the preſent pleaſure it yieldeth, all the motives, I ſay, may operate, not for ſuppreſſing the good affection, but as reaſons for encouraging and ſtrengthening it. And you ſee this is plainly what the author of nature, who has furniſhed us with theſe motives, intended. In a word, we are not out of nature in uſing all the means we can in encouraging goodneſs; and our doing ſo, is very conſiſtent with the exerciſe of the pureſt and moſt diſintereſted good-will; ſomething of this there muſt be in the heart, or elſe there is indeed nothing to be rewarded. But of this ſubject there will be an opportunity of ſpeaking farther afterwards.

Laſtly, It is the province of reaſon to deliver the mind from prejudices, and the falſe colours caſt upon objects, by which the judgment and the affections are often led ſadly aſtray; of which, all who attend to themſelves muſt have a painful experience. Why are we found averſe to what reaſon and nature pronounce excellent and lovely, but that theſe things appear to us in a falſe light? Why elſe do we take pleaſure in any thing baſe, deformed, and hateful? Why is good put for evil and evil for good? Why ſhall men

men do very bad things and take pleaſure in Serm. them, when in doing them they imagine X.
they do God good ſervice? The judgment and the ſpiritual ſenſes are often ſo perverted, that as our Saviour hath very ſtrongly, but very juſtly expreſſed it, *the light* which is in men, becometh *darkneſs*; and if ſo, *how great is that darkneſs?* Now, theſe prejudices are ſometimes the effect of *evil luſts warring in the heart*; which have a moſt unhappy influence upon the judgment and the ſpiritual ſenſes. They do indeed, eſpecially, *the luſts of the fleſh*, war againſt the ſoul. Sometimes they are the effect of education, and of errors which men have imbibed in their infancy, and which it is extremely difficult to baniſh from the mind; principally in matters of religion; perhaps nothing more difficult. Sometimes they are the fruit of mere habit and cuſtom; or the fruit of faſhion, which men find it difficult to reſiſt. What an inexpreſſible influence have theſe prejudices upon our affections upon our joys, and our ſorrows, our loves, and our averſions, our fears, and our hopes? But from whatever cauſe they ariſe, it is the province of reaſon to remove them. To ſearch after truth and nature; to examine the workings of imagination, and all the aſſociations of our ideas; to call every ſuggeſtion, which ariſeth in the mind, and every fancy, to the

Serm. bar; and examine them by the unqueſtion-
X. able principles of reaſon, that nothing may
be indulged and encouraged but what is ac-
cording to nature and truth; and that all
phantaſtical combinations of ideas may be
rejected; no matter how they prevail in the
world about us; no matter how they have
been entertained by ourſelves; if they are
unjuſt, and upon deliberate inquiry they are
found to be ſo, they are to be rejected. And
though we are apt to complain of the weak-
neſs of our minds, and that very juſtly; yet
we have more reaſon to complain of our
indolence and want of application. It is in-
conceivable what effects a careful and im-
partial inquiry will produce. Amazing the
effects it hath produced. And we muſt
every one of us be ſenſible of the influence
which thinking cloſely, and communing with
our own hearts, and converſation with others,
aſſiſting theſe, hath upon the affections. How
averſion againſt certain objects hath been re-
moved, or changed into the love of them;
how fear hath been baniſhed and given way
to fortitude of ſpirit; how evil luſts have
yielded the place to purity of ſentiments, and
to diſpoſitions which are good and holy;
and though this kind of diſcipline will not
produce equal effects in all, yet, where it is
in good earneſt applied, it will produce ſome

good

good effects; and make men better than they were, though perhaps, not what they ought to be. Thus I have given you a view of the great uſe of reaſon and underſtanding with reſpect to the affections, And I hope nothing hath been ſaid but what the attentive and thinking will apprehend, and diſcern to be juſt. SERM. X.

The other great governing power is that of conſcience, of which I ſhall treat more largely and particularly. Conſcience was plainly intended to be ſupreme in our frame; and you will eaſily obſerve, that it is a power or faculty diſtinct from any which hath been yet conſidered. We might conceive all the affections I have been treating of combined together; we might conceive reaſon ſuperadded; and yet all this without a ſenſe of moral good and evil, of moral excellency and deformity. This caſteth a colour upon objects, if I may uſe the expreſſion, which is peculiar. Indeed, like all other ſimple ideas, it doth not admit of definition; but appears to be as uniform amongſt mankind, as the ſenſes of ſmelling or taſting, or any other, I may ſay more ſo. As we know how taſtes or ſmells are offenſive or inoffenſive by our ſenſes of ſmelling or taſting, ſo by the ſenſe of right or wrong, of excellent and vile, in affections and actions, ſome of them appear

SERM. X. beautiful and becoming, of which we feel a moſt pleaſing approbation; others hateful, vile, and abominable, and which our reflecting thoughts condemn as ſuch, and cannot but condemn. Now, the power of the mind in directing our conduct according to this ſpiritual ſenſe, which is indeed the law of our nature, and of approving or condemning our paſt actions, as they have been agreeable or diſagreeable to it, we call conſcience. A power which is plainly peculiar to mankind, amongſt all the orders of life which we meet with in this world. For none of the brutal kinds diſcover any thing of it, or of that ſenſe of moral good or evil.

Every man muſt be ſenſible that he is affected in quite another manner by the ſentence paſſed by this power, than by any thing elſe. We blame ourſelves when we have committed errors in point of prudence, or in point of common decency, and the various forms of it; but we feel and ſuffer in quite another manner, when we have done a thing wrong and wicked, and have contracted any moral ſtain, by a tranſgreſſion of this law of our nature. On the other hand, nothing giveth us ſo great pleaſure as having acted according to it; it is pleaſure of a peculiar kind, and by a well-diſpoſed mind will be preferred to all other joys.

It

It ſeems to be evident, that in this ſenſe of Sect. X.
right and wrong, moral obligation is found-
ed, and that from this it taketh its riſe; for
it appears to be impoſſible to ſeparate a ſenſe
of obligation from a ſenſe of right. Surely
the moſt obvious and natural reaſon in the
world for doing any thing is, becauſe it is
right to do it: And if a thing be evidently
wrong, and which our conſciences muſt con-
demn, is not this an obvious reaſon why we
ſhould not do it? Can we have a ſenſe of
right or wrong at all, without feeling in our-
ſelves that diſpoſition of mind which every
one expreſſeth by theſe words, I ought to do
what is right; I ought to avoid what is
wrong. But hitherto I have ſpoken of con-
ſcience only as pointing out to us our way, and
as judging of our actions according to the
ſenſe of good and evil with which we are en-
dowed. But this power becomes ſacred up-
on another account. We cannot deliberately
conſider theſe ſpiritual ſenſes, with which
our Maker hath dignified our frame, without
concluding that he, who endowed human
nature with them, is poſſeſſed of them him-
ſelf in the moſt perfect poſſible degree. As
we cannot but ſee an excellence and per-
fection in them, and that they are the ſources
of the higheſt happineſs in ourſelves or any
other being, that we have any idea of; ſo we

can

can ſee nothing in them which is incompa-
X. tible with any other of the divine perfections.
Were we to ſuppoſe that the ſupreme being diſcerned no difference between good and evil; we muſt conſider him as a being moſt imperfect, and in whom infinite power and underſtanding, would be indeed moſt formidable, but not at all excellent or lovely. We muſt therefore reſt in it, that God hath this diſcernment of good and evil in him in the moſt perfect manner; that the former is above all things pleaſing to him, and the latter diſpleaſing. We cannot help concluding the ſame thing, from the joy and other advantages which he hath annexed to the practice of virtue by our original conſtitution, and that he hath made vice in ſo many reſpects its own puniſhment. Yet what we ſee of this at preſent, doth not at all come up to our ideas of a perfect moral adminiſtration; in which, without exception in one ſingle inſtance, every individual, without reſpect of perſons, ſhould receive according to *his deeds*, and *bear his own burthen*; and therefore we cannot help being perſuaded, that there cometh a ſeaſon, in which this ſhall be the caſe. Thus, while our conſciences point out what is right, and what is wrong, approving the one and condemning the other; they at the ſame time direct our views to the ſupreme

preme being as our judge, who will be pleaſed with, and reward good actions, and be diſpleaſed with, and puniſh bad ones. This giveth conſcience a great and ſacred power; and on this account we owe more deference and attention to it, than to all the world. The dictates of a well informed conſcience, are the dictates of our maker; every contradiction to them is a tranſgreſſion of his laws, for which conſcience forebodes puniſhment; ſo that no wonder the wounds of it are hardly to be borne, and give the moſt exquiſite pain.

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The abſolute authority of conſcience is to be very particularly noticed. It doth not admit evil to be done upon any account whatſoever; no intereſt muſt ſtand in its way, ſo as to produce diſloyalty to it. No matter what men may ſuffer for obeying its dictates, loſs of name and reputation, loſs of eſtate, loſs of life, it demandeth obedience at all adventures; and knows no compliance with evil in any ſingle inſtance. The ſubmiſſion muſt be abſolute. It alone poſſeſſes the throne in the heart, and in a right diſciplined mind holds it unrivalled. It is really very pleaſing to obſerve the power of it, as it hath appeared in many inſtances, baffling the power of the moſt formidable tyrants, unmoved at all their threats, at all their tortures. The proud and impious *Nebuchadnezzar*, with all his hoſts,

and

power, and with his burning fiery furnace, could make no impreſſion upon the three poor friendleſs, and to outward appearance, helpleſs Jews, who dared openly, and to his face, to oppoſe his impious edict. Their anſwer is admirable; Dan. iii. 16. *O* Nebuchadnezzar, *we are not careful to anſwer thee in this matter; if it be ſo, our God whom we ſerve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known to thee, O King, that we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip the golden image which thou haſt ſet up.* And a ſpirit no leſs heroic hath been ſeen in innumerable other inſtances, in caſes of the like nature. Thus we ſee conſcience admitteth of no controul: The rights of it may be violated by the gratification of evil luſts, and the power of it may be weakened, or in a manner deſtroyed; but where it is in its natural and proper ſtrength, and holds it proper ſtation, it's authority is abſolute; and it deſcends moſt minutely to all things which come under the notion of right and wrong. If we attend to it, we ſhall ſee that moſt things which come under the notion of evil, and which are diſagreeable and offenſive to our ſpiritual ſenſes, are what are hurtful to our neighbour; and thoſe things which are approved and lovely, tend to the good of others: And indeed the connections

connections of things, and their mutual rela- Serm.
tions, are ſuch, that we can hardly name an X.
inſtance, in which we do evil to ourſelves, but at the ſame time we are hurtful to others. Yet there are ſome inſtances in which what is merely perſonal, falleth under the notion of right and wrong; and is a matter under the cognizance of conſcience; and it would ſeem that virtue and vice might exiſt, even if a perſon were alone in the midſt of the earth. However, the beſt philoſopher that ever appeared in the world hath taught us, Matt. xxii. 37. That right affection towards God and man, is indeed the ſum of morality. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy ſtrength; and thy neighbour as thyſelf; upon theſe two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*; and agreeably to this, the Apoſtle *Paul* teacheth us, *Rom.* xiii. 10. *That love is the fulfilling of the law.* But whatſoever it is that falleth under the notion of right and wrong, there conſcience is to direct and have the dominion, whether it be a matter which concerneth others, or ourſelves only. And the voice of conſcience is really to be conſidered as the voice of God; conſcience, I ſay, well enlightened and informed by the principles of reaſon, and by the word of God.

This ought to be very particularly attended to. Through prejudice and erroneous opini-

ons in matters of religion, the dictates of conſcience may be ſometimes quite wrong; it may condemn what is innocent, it may approve what is culpable; to theſe miſtakes we owe all ſuperſtition, and all the evils which are in it's train; to theſe we owe narrowneſs of mind in religion, and that ſcrupuloſity which is often painful, and not ſeldom a great ſnare to men; and to theſe frequently is owing licentiouſneſs of life, and indulgence in things which are really wrong. But we are endowed with reaſon, and a capacity of inquiry, and of judging in matters of religion; and cool, deliberate, impartial inquiry, will ſeldom fail of preparing men for forming right judgements: Or if a caſe ſhould happen in which, after all the pains they can take, they are at a loſs, or are led into involuntary miſtakes, ſurely thoſe will not be imputed to them as guilt; their ſincerity will be accepted, otherwiſe no man could aſſure his heart before God, but upon ſuppoſition of infallibility of judgment, which is a thing no man can pretend to.

Upon the whole, we ſee what proviſion the God of nature hath made for the order and government of the human mind. The whole train of the private affections are intended to be under the control of a deliberate regard to our own intereſt and happineſs. The whole

train

train of the good and ſocial affections, under SERM.
the check and direction of a calm deliberate X.
attention to what is the greateſt good we can
do to others; and overall, a power of a nature
quite diſtinct from theſe, a ſenſe of right and
conſcience, which is the moſt excellent and
ſacred in our frame, and by which we are
capable of the higheſt kind of happineſs, and
of communion with the ſuperior orders of be-
ing, even with the ſupreme. It is this power
which is by far of the greateſt energy, by
which the beautiful order of the ſoul is moſt
effectually maintained, and the ſubordination
of the inferior affections and deſires to thoſe
of an higher ſtation preſerved. From this
power the good affections have their greateſt
ſtrength; and it will be readily acknowledged
that the whole ſyſtem is beautiful, and con-
trived with the greateſt wiſdom; all reſting
on this plain and obvious maxim, that we are
always to do what is right, and avoid what is
wrong. In our doing this, the whole ſoul
will be preſerved in a proper temper, and
the great end of life which this admirable
compoſition aimeth at, will be ſucceſsfully
ſerved. It will be ſo without our entering
into any laborious and deep inquiries what
that end is; for by doing what is right, we
ſhall moſt aſſuredly attain to it.

I ſhall

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I shall conclude this discourse with taking notice of, and endeavouring to remove one difficulty which must occur upon what hath been said; namely, that of those affections which God hath planted in the heart, even in their best and most perfect state, some have a tendency directly opposite to others, and points to ends directly opposite to one another. For example, in many instances self-love draws one way, and an affectionate regard to the good of others, just the opposite; directly as two antagonist muscles in the human body; and it may be impossible to reconcile these affections by any thing in our power. In the same manner, conscience may direct us to an action as our duty which is contrary to the tendencies both of self-love and good-will; and, as has been said, it absolutely prohibits our committing any crime, knowing it to be such, upon any account whatsoever, even to save our own existence. Now, what is to be done in this case? Our constitution we cannot alter. These different tendencies of self-love and conscience, we cannot possibly reconcile; and could the author of nature intend that there should be an everlasting contradiction between those principles which are most important and essential in our frame? Here it seemeth indeed that we

we want the interpoſition of the author of our frame. And it appears, from this ſtate of things, highly probable, that it was not his intention to leave nature intirely to the principles with which he originally endowed it, without any interpoſition of his own; for, in that caſe, it muſt indeed appear an imperfect work. Accordingly, reaſon itſelf allows us to hope for ſuch an interpoſition, by which thoſe who followed the dictates of conſcience, at any expence, ſhall have their wrongs redreſſed, and their loſſes compenſated. Revelation aſſures us of this; and points out a future judgment, in which the righteous ſhall be vindicated and made happy. So that whatever a perſon may ſuffer in compliance with the dictates of conſcience, he ſhall not be a final loſer, but indeed a great gainer. By this appointment, the private, and which are called the ſelfiſh affections, are brought over to the ſide of conſcience, and become of it's party; and conſcience and inclination go harmoniouſly on; which it is plain, without ſuch an interpoſition, they would not do. Without it, we would be of ſuch a make, that the higheſt principle in our conſtitution would purſue meaſures that might cut off intirely our exiſtence; and the higheſt excellency in our frame become the

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SERM. X. utter deſtruction of it. This can never be the caſe under God's government; and therefore, ſince we know that many have given up life rather than do violence to the rights of conſcience, we muſt believe that there is another ſtate, and another world, where all, which at preſent appears imperfect in the divine adminiſtration, ſhall be ſet right, to the full ſatisfaction of the whole intellectual and moral creation.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

Of the Loſs of the Soul, and the dreadful torments which it may ſuffer in a future ſtate.

MATTHEW XVI. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own Soul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Soul?

IN ſome former diſcourſes I gave you a ſhort repreſentation of the powers and faculties of the human ſoul; the chief deſign of which was to ſhew the excellency of them, and how much our happineſs and enjoyment muſt have been intended by the author of our beings. But it ought to be deeply conſidered, that theſe powers by which we become capable of ſo much happineſs, do

SERM. XI. likewiſe render us obnoxious to great miſery. We ſee from our bleſſed Saviour's expreſſion in the text, that the ſoul may be loſt. The meaning of this is not, that it ſhall be loſt to exiſtence; for we have reaſon from the light of nature to believe, and it is fully declared in the Holy Scriptures, that the ſouls of the bad, as well as the good, ſhall ſubſiſt after death; and that, in another ſtate, both good and bad ſhall receive from the judge of all the earth according to their works. But though the immortal ſpirit cannot be loſt to exiſtence, it may be loſt intirely to happineſs; it may ſuffer ſo much miſery, that *being* may become a moſt grievous burthen; And this is no doubt what our Saviour intended. The ſoul is indeed loſt, when, under the power of evil diſpoſitions, and in a corrupted and hateful moral ſtate, it goeth into the other world, the object of divine diſpleaſure and indignation, and with its powers and affections ſo perverted, that inſtead of being ſources of joy and bliſs, they become inexhauſtible ſprings of ſorrow and woe. Now, here we may diſtinctly conſider, Firſt, the miſery which muſt ſpring from a conſciouſneſs of bad affections and a bad life; and Secondly, what may be apprehended from the juſt diſpleaſure and wrath of God.

I begin with the firſt of theſe, which, by what

what we know of ourſelves, and of the powers of our minds, we may beſt underſtand. It may be in general obſerved, that from the ſenſe of right and wrong which God hath planted in us, and the excellency and beauty we ſee in worthy affections and good actions, and the vileneſs and deformity there is in evil affections and evil actions, there ariſeth high delight in exerciſing good affections, and in doing good actions, and from our reflecting upon them. Perhaps there is nothing in this world which giveth ſo great joy to a well-diſpoſed mind. On the other hand, there is a corruption and deformity in evil affections and actions which giveth great pain to the reflecting mind; a pollution in them which maketh a man vile in his own ſight, and to himſelf abominable. I deny not that men may have pleaſure in very bad actions, for it is often the caſe, and perhaps in reflecting upon them too, in ſome inſtances. But this can be the caſe only where corrupt luſts and deſires have the preſent dominion over the mind, and the moral powers are in a manner proſtrated, and loſt to the purpoſes of them. Conſcience may be ſo far enfeebled, I might rather ſay, benumbed, that men ſhall commit great ſin without painful remorſe, and ſhall become vile and abominable without ſeeming to be ſenſible of their being ſo. But this inſenſibi-

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Sect. XI. lity of the moral powers cannot continue. Sooner or later conſcience will awake, and bear a faithful teſtimony. It hath often been ſeen to recover it's ſenſibility even in this life, in ſome of the wickedeſt of men; and will always naturally do ſo, when thoſe things by which the moral powers have been depreſſed and enfeebled are removed, and men come to think coolly and deliberately, and to judge impartially. And if there ſhould be no awakening of conſcience in this world, we have good reaſon to believe that it ſhall awake in the next, with all it's ſtrength and ſenſibility. Then the morally impure and guilty muſt ſee that they are hateful and abominable; muſt loath and abhor themſelves. And what muſt a man's ſtate be, when he is an object of abhorrence to himſelf, an object vile in his own eyes; vile in the eyes of all others? Here it is to be carefully attended to, that though the original ſenſe of right and wrong is uniform, and the ſame in all men, yet there is avaſt variety in the manner in which men's imaginations, in purſuance of it, are affected; a great variety in the degree of pleaſure or pain it yields, and in the moral taſte, with reſpect to the delicacy of it. We ſee men who judge in the ſame manner concerning things as good and evil in general, who yet are not in the ſame manner affected by them. Some ſhall paſs over bad

action

actions in themſelves, or others, acknowledg- SERM. ing them to be bad, without any ſevere ani- XI. madverſion; while others behold or reflect upon the ſame actions with pain and horror. Juſt as ſome perſons paſs over, with very little notice, the beauties or defects in works of the ſtatuary or painter, while perſons of taſte and diſcernment ſhall be much affected by them. This variety, in the degrees of moral taſte and diſcernment, may be owing to different cauſes; to the original make and frame, or to education, to cuſtom and habit, and others like theſe. But, however, when we judge of the high delight which ſpringeth from a right moral temper, and a virtuous conduct of life, we muſt attend to what the moſt exquiſite reliſh, and the moſt perfect taſte of them yieldeth: And when we attend to the pains which ariſe from a conſciouſneſs of a bad moral ſtate, and of a polluted and guilty life, we muſt conſider what that pain ſhall be in a ſtate of the greateſt ſenſibility. This is the way to judge aright. And ſurely there is reaſon to believe that in the life to come, as the happy will have an exquiſite and moſt delicate reliſh of the joys of their ſtate, ſo the miſerable will have an exquiſite ſenſe of the pain of theirs. This is a proſpect really moſt alarming; I think, I may ſay, of all things, moſt alarming. How excruciating have the pains of a guilty con-

SERM. XI. ſcience been to ſome perſons even in this world? Have they not riſen to the very diſtraction of melancholy? Human nature cannot in this world appear ſo deplorable in any other inſtance.

Now, abſtracting from what may be apprehended from the wrath of God, the very ſenſe of deformity and vileneſs may ariſe to ſuch a degree, as to make exiſtence an object of horror to a man. And it is fit to conſider this in the firſt place, as it is the foundation of all the reſt: For could a perſon be pleaſed with, and ſatisfied in himſelf, and diſcern an excellency and beauty in his own ſtate, it may be truly ſaid, that nothing external to him could make him altogether miſerable; he might endure moſt grievous pains; but ſtill he would have in himſelf ſome conſolation. But when a perſon muſt continually loath himſelf, and when thoſe very original powers by which he was made capable of high felicity, become the means and engines of torment to him, how miſerable muſt he be? Our bleſſed Saviour is by moſt interpreters thought to mean a condemning conſcience, when he ſpeaks of *the worm that dieth not*: And a dreadful inmate it is, as always preying on the vitals. Let it be added to all that hath been ſaid upon this head, that our imaginations, our ſenſibility, diſcernment, and taſte in theſe matters, are not in our power. That imagination often getteth

getteth the better of all our endeavours in this world, is what we ſadly experience. That the ſorrows of it are not to be managed nor controled by the meer command of our will, we know; but we alſo know that it is in the power of our Maker; and if in righteous judgment he ſhall uſe it as a means of puniſhing the guilty, who can ſay to what a degree of ſenſibility it may be raiſed, and what pain it may give? It has been known, that men's reflections upon one ſingle unworthy action have given them ſuch pain, that they have become impatient of life; and have become their own executioners: But what muſt be the caſe, when conſcience repreſenteth a long train of criminal actions, a courſe of evil doing? When this is the caſe, had a man no creature in the univerſe to compare himſelf with, he muſt find himſelf in great miſery. But the matter will appear to be heightened, when we conſider, that it does not ſeem conceivable that men ſhould have ſuch a ſenſe of moral deformity, but they muſt at the ſame time have a proportionable ſenſibility of moral beauty and excellence: And we may, I think, conceive ſuch a ſenſibility, when the mind is in a very corrupted ſtate, without any love of it. For a capacity of beholding the glory, and of imagining the dignity and excellence of virtue, is a very different thing from a cordial attachment

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ment to it. Nor is there any thing more common than for men to be under a neceſſity of admiring eminent worth, when they have no inclinations to imitate it, and indeed are in their hearts averſe to it; rather enemies than friends to the character. Now, if we ſhall ſuppoſe, in the minds of the condemned and miſerable, a ſenſibility of moral excellence, in proportion to their ſenſe of deformity, how muſt they appear to themſelves in compariſon with thoſe, who, in all the luſtre of holineſs and goodneſs, are ſhining as ſo many ſtars, as the ſcriptures ſpeak, for ever and ever; the objects of their envy, perhaps of their hatred? Knowing, well knowing, that this vaſt and everlaſting difference between them is altogether owing to themſelves, and the work of their own hands: For they cannot ſay, but what theſe actually are, they might have been. And ſhould we, beſides all this, ſuppoſe the ſoul to be full of paſſions that never were reſtrained, never diſciplined in this world, and that now admit of no reſtraint, but rage as ſo many furies; what muſt the ſtate of the mind be? It hath been the opinion of ſome learned and wiſe men, that even the paſſions of animal nature, and the love of ſenſual pleaſure, might continue in the ſoul after its ſeparation from the body. For this they have given reaſons, which to

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ſay the leaſt, are plauſible; particularly, as it hath been often ſeen that ſuch luſts have had great power in the mind when the capacity of gratification was no more. Now, ſhould this be the caſe, and the mind fermented with paſſions which never can be gratified, how miſerable the ſtate of it! Upon the whole, were we to ſuppoſe no puniſhment inflicted upon the wicked, but that miſery of which the powers and affections of the mind are the ſources, the ſtate muſt be extremely unhappy. This brings to mind a paſſage in the greateſt of all our *Engliſh* poets, in which ſatan is introduced, as after his fall, reflecting upon his ſtate. *He found himſelf in the loweſt hell*; but the poet repreſenteth him as finding in himſelf an hell ſtill deeper and more miſerable than that. A moſt affecting way of expreſſing it, that our greateſt miſeries are immediately from ourſelves, and nothing can make us ſo unhappy as we make ourſelves. Thus what is originally the nobleſt work of God in this world, may be rendered the moſt hateful and abominable; and what was capable of the higheſt kind of happineſs be ſubjected to the greateſt miſery. I hope it will appear to you that in all this there is nothing romantic, and nothing but what ariſeth naturally from our very conſtitution, as reaſonable and moral agents.

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But, in the next place, we are to conſider what may be dreaded as the effect of the juſt diſpleaſure and indignation of the ſupreme ruler. It doth indeed appear, from what hath been ſaid, that if an awakened and condemning conſcience is left to itſelf, it may, without any other cauſe, make the ſtate extreamly wretched. However, no man from any principles of reaſon can juſtly infer that there ſhall be no other puniſhment; and it is certain, the Holy Scriptures repreſent to us, in the ſtrongeſt terms, puniſhment of another nature; namely, ſtrokes inflicted by the Divine hand, under the notion of puniſhment. Thus our bleſſed Saviour as he ſpeaketh of a *worm that ſhall not die*, ſo likewiſe, *of a fire that ſhall not be quenched*. And in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, repreſents *the rich man* as being *in torments in hell, and as ſcorched in that flame*. And the apoſtle *Paul* ſpeaketh of *indignation and wrath, tribulation, and anguiſh*, in reſerve *for every ſoul of man who doth evil*. He ſpeaketh alſo, Theſſ. i. 7. of *the Lord Jeſus being revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them who have not known God, or obeyed the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; *who*, ſaith he, *ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord and the glory of his power*. And we read

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in Rev. xxi. 8. of thoſe, who are condemned, being caſt into *a lake burning with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death*; and xxth and 10th verſe, *of their being tormented day and night for ever and ever.* I believe it is generally thought, that theſe repreſentations are figurative. We all underſtand the repreſentations of the new Jeruſalem, or heaven, as of this kind. And whenever we read of walls of jaſper, and gates of pearl, and ſtreets of gold, we make no difficulty of ſuch matters, conſidering them as figurative repreſentations; well knowing that the happineſs of the heavenly ſtate hath no ſort of connection with gold or precious ſtones. And for the ſame reaſon we may conſider lakes of fire and brimſtone, as figures repreſenting the great ſufferings of thoſe who are condemned to that ſtate. But it is certain, that the general intention of all theſe repreſentations is, to ſhew us that poſitive puniſhment will, by the ſupreme ruler, be inflicted upon the ungodly, as an expreſſion of his diſpleaſure; and we may be ſure, that this puniſhment will be directed by the wiſdom and juſtice of God, ſo as to anſwer the great ends and deſigns of his moral adminiſtration. But how far they may be carried, and how ſevere they may be, who can take upon him particularly to declare? *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the*

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SERM. XI. *living God.* His power is Almighty, and none can deliver out of his hand. It is one of the graveſt and moſt weighty conſiderations which can offer itſelf to the human mind, that the ſcriptures never repreſent any end of thoſe puniſhments. But that the ſeparation of the righteous from the wicked ſhall be everlaſting. Now, the deſign of all theſe ſtrong expreſſions is plainly to impreſs our minds deeply with a ſenſe of the infinite danger there is in a wicked and unrighteous courſe of life. It is an ingenious obſervation which hath been made by ſome perſons upon this argument, that theſe terrible objects are viewed by us at a diſtance; and that the reality in them ſhall be as great as our preſent views and imaginations lead us to apprehend. We know that objects, ſeen by the bodily eye at a great diſtance, appear far leſs than they really are; and therefore if we would judge rightly concerning the true dimenſions of ſuch objects, we muſt ſuppoſe them a vaſt deal larger in their dimenſions than they appear to us; conſequently, that any one at the place where they are, or in a place as diſtant from us, who would hold up to us a landſcape or repreſentation of what they really were, muſt draw it much larger than the objects themſelves; and yet they would be nothing at all larger in their appearance to us,

us, at that distant view. In like manner, as those objects which are the subjects of the present discourse are viewed at a distance, the representations of them may not be too strong, seeing the views we at present get by them may not at all be aggravated. But whatever there may be in this, it is plain, that the design of the sacred writers was to impress our minds with the deepest and most awful sense of that state of punishment which is in reserve for the finally wicked and impenitent. SERM. XI.

But while we are speaking of the Divine displeasure and indignation, it cannot but occur to our minds that this itself must be grievous punishment. To be the object of God's displeasure and aversion, must to every one who can think, appear a most unhappy thing. To be beloved of God is the most solid and substantial honour; to be an object of aversion and abhorrence to him must be the greatest infamy: and surely, they who are the objects of his aversion, must be the aversion of the whole worthy intellectual creation. Here is an enmity then, which appeareth to be quite insupportable. Yet again, if we shall consider the desperate state of those who are thus cast out of the Divine presence and favour, it will appear that the enmity must be mutual. Any being which is an object

Serm. XI. object only of terror, muſt be proportionably the object of averſion; and one, in this ſtate, would deſire nothing more earneſtly, than that there were no ſuch being, that there was an end of its exiſtence. In like manner, if thoſe unhappy perſons have nothing to hope, but every thing to fear from the Supreme Being; they muſt be enemies, utter enemies to him, and muſt account it happineſs, were the thing poſſible, that there were no ſuch being. They who are unrighteous are repreſented, while they are in this world, *as enemies to God, by wicked works in their minds.* And it may be truly ſaid that they are ſo. How much greater that enmity in a ſtate abſolutely deſperate! what a ſtate of the mind muſt this be! to be at irreconcilable enmity with infinite excellency and goodneſs, to hate a Being who is infinitely amiable; and exiſting in a ſtate which is the ſtrongeſt imaginable contradiction to nature, a ſtate which is in truth diabolical, and which one cannot think of without the utmoſt horror! There is really no conſideration which hath been offered upon this argument which will ſo much move an ingenuous mind as this, or that will ſet the miſery of that ſtate in ſo affecting a light, as that it is a ſtate of enmity with the infinitely excellent, good, and lovely, parent of the univerſe. To reflect upon

upon it as ſuch, raiſes an [illegible] mixture of averſion and horror. How earneſtly would a good mind wiſh there were no ſuch beings in the creation! and that there never had been ſuch an object of contemplation to the human mind! 'tis diſtreſs even to think of it. And yet from what the ungodly may experience paſſing in their own minds in this life, they may judge what the temper of the mind is like to be, in a ſtate utterly deſperate. Upon the whole, however, we may be led into ſuch particular ſpeculations and conjectures, from what we know concerning the powers and faculties of the human mind, and of the influence of moral depravity and corruption upon them, and from what the Holy Scriptures have ſaid concerning a future ſtate of puniſhment for the impenitently wicked and rebellious; yet what our minds ought principally to fix upon, is this, that in the ſtate and world to come the righteous ſhall be rewarded, and the wicked ſhall be puniſhed; that the Supreme Ruler will make a great diſtinction between them; and men ſhall be rewarded according to their works. Thus our Saviour teacheth in the words immediately following my text; *For the ſon of man ſhall come in the glory of his father with his angels, and then ſhall he reward every man according to his works.* And as to the

SERM. XI. particulars which may be intended by the figurative repreſentations we have in ſcripture, the mind ſecurely reſts in this, that the judge of all the earth will do right. That the hand which miniſtreth rewards and puniſhments is under the direction of the moſt perfect wiſdom, equity, and goodneſs; and that therefore the adminiſtration muſt approve itſelf to the whole intellectual creation. We may err in our interpretation of figurative repreſentations; but we cannot err in this, that perfect wiſdom and righteouſneſs are enthroned above; and that no decree ſhall proceed from that throne but what is perfectly agreeable to truth, to what is fit and right. And particularly, as all puniſhment is ſettled by this perfect wiſdom and equity, both with reſpect to the meaſure and the duration of it; ſo there will never be any juſt reaſon to complain.

Having thus repreſented to you what is meant by the loſs of the ſoul, I ſhould, in the next place, illuſtrate that which our Saviour teacheth, that it can be no profit to a man, to gain the whole world, if he ſhould loſe his own ſoul. But this is an argument I muſt defer to ſome other occaſion, and ſhall conclude the preſent diſcourſe with a few reflections upon what hath been ſaid.

The ſubject I have been treating is one, which of all things moſt painfully affecteth the

the mind. It is with ſome reluctance the Serm.
thoughts are turned to it; they gladly part XII.
from it. Who can take pleaſure in the view
or imagination of human nature in miſery?
Yet our meditating upon the terrors of God,
may ſometimes be of ſignal uſe, to awaken
the conſcience, to give life and ſpirit in the
reformation of what is amiſs, and in the dili-
gent performance of our duty, ſo that we
may eſcape the wrath to come. I have en-
deavoured in the paſt diſcourſes to give you a
very particular view of the ſprings of that
happineſs in which the righteous ſhall for
ever rejoice: And it is but fit we ſhould ſe-
rioufly view likewiſe the miſery into which
the wicked ſhall fall. We ſee the ſoul of man,
capable of, and intend for, ſuch unſpeakable
happineſs, is likewiſe liable to inexpreſſible
miſery. *Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor
hath it entered into the heart of man, what God
hath laid up for thoſe that love him*; and who
hath fully conceived of that *tribulation and an-
guiſh* which are laid up in reſerve for thoſe
who hate him? But what moſt naturally oc-
curs to the mind upon this occaſion, is, what
pity it is that a creature ſo excellent as the
human ſoul, and capable of ſuch bliſs, ſhould
ever become ſo miſerable; what pity that
any ſuch creature ſhould be loſt! To this
there is nothing that I know to be ſaid, but

SERM. XI. that that very frame, and those powers which make the mind capable of so much happiness, do also, in the very nature of the thing, make it susceptible of so much misery. And it doth not appear, that a creature could be of the human make and frame, but which, by an abuse of it's powers, must also be susceptible of moral stain and misery. And here the mind must rest; I know nothing else it can rest in. But let us not represent God to our own minds as the author of moral evil, because he made us of such a species or kind. For if there was to be such a kind of beings at all, they must be liable to evil. *But God is not tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* James i. 13. It is from our own unhappy choice that the evil proceedeth, and if there be a freedom of choice at all, men must have been capable of choosing both evil and good. It may be urged, it had been better that such a species of creatures had not been made. This is a way of thinking indeed, into which the bad and the miserable may be supposed very naturally to fall; but it will never approve itself to the good and the virtuous, who have hope toward God of great and eternal felicity.

felicity. Theſe cannot but look upon the exiſtence which God hath given them as a moſt invaluable favour; will always find reaſon to rejoice in it. And why ſhould the foreſeen miſcarriage of the evil and bad, have prevented the bringing into the creation of God ſo much happineſs and excellency? Why ſhould that which is the very glory of the creation have had no exiſtence? If this, which hath been mentioned on the other hand, is a good argument with reſpect to mankind, it is a good argument likewiſe with reſpect to the angelic orders, and muſt be a good argument with reſpect to all created moral agents whatſoever. If none of theſe had exiſted, nor any thing in the creation of God, above the brutal kind, then indeed this creation muſt have been of ſmall value, and the queſtion might, not irrationally, be put, why was there any work of creation at all? And upon this ſuppoſition of no creation, there could have been no exertion of the infinite power and goodneſs of God. Thus it is plain, that if we purſue ſuch inquiries, and give an uneaſy and diſcontented ſpirit full way; it will lead us into all abſurdities. But theſe matters, comparatively, we have nothing to do with. The world is made by the power and wiſdom of God ſuch as it is; the frame and conſtitution of it will not change into a conformity to our deſires. We may

Sect. XI.

SERM. XI. torment ourſelves with vain wiſhes and imaginations, but the ſtate and condition of things will continue what it is; and indeed, we ſee in it ſuch characters of goodneſs, as well as wiſdom and power, that we cannot but believe that the author had a moſt excellent and worthy deſign in the glorious work: And with reſpect to every individual, the great queſtion is this, whether happineſs is not brought within his reach? Whether he hath not all needful encouragement, and the moſt rational hopes given him, in purſuing after it? If he hath, then let all thoſe melancholy and moving ſentiments concerning the miſery into which bad men fall, be improved as incentives to turn from their path, and to apply to thoſe labours and that courſe of life, by which high and eternal happineſs will be enſured. This is the proper uſe to be made of our perplexity; and in this manner we may become aſſured, that *being* will prove to us an invaluable bleſſing.

Another reflection, I would make from what hath been ſaid upon the ſubject is this. We ſee that the happineſs of the righteous is to ſpring immediately from the ſtate and temper of their own minds; and ſo is the miſery of the wicked; it ſpringeth principally from their bad and corrupted moral ſtate. External things are but of ſecondary conſideration

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in this reſpect. Now, from this we may ſee how vain all dependence upon external rites must be to make men happy. And how miſerably abſurd it muſt be, at the approaches of death, to rely upon ſuch things as theſe; be they what they will, can they alter the ſtate of the mind? Can they infuſe good affections? Can they give the new heart and the right ſpirit? Can they render a perſon lovely in the eye of his Maker, or turn away his indignation from him? And indeed there cannot be a more pernicious delufion, than to aſcribe to ſuch external rites an efficacy, as inſeparable from them. I hope *we have not ſo learned Chriſt:* And that we are well inſtructed that a right temper and ſtate of the mind is all in all. But as many, in the folly and weakneſs of ſuperſtition, are betrayed into an abſurd dependence upon external rites and ceremonies on the approaches of death; ſo it is to be feared, that a dependence upon a late, perhaps, a death-bed repentance, is a ſnare to not a few; who put off that great and neceſſary work of repentance to the laſt. If we may judge from the ſcriptural account of repentance which is a renovation of the heart and life; if we may judge from the effects of repentance upon a ſick-bed, in perſons who have been reſtored to health, we have little

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reaſon to believe it will be available. O! how different a thing is ſuch a ſudden emotion, the effect of preſent dreadful apprehenſions of miſery, from a fixed and ſettled right temper of ſpirit; from a ſtate of mind in which good and worthy affections have long prevailed, and by continued habits of righteouſneſs, have been ſtrengthened and confirmed? In which the whole ſoul may be ſaid to be formed for happineſs, and the reliſh for it is quick and delicate?

SERMON

SERMON XII.

The insignificance of all temporal acquisitions when opposite to future happiness, and purchased by the Loss of the Soul.

MATTHEW XVI. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul?

IN several late discourses, I have represented to you the powers and faculties of the human soul, principally with a view of shewing the excellency of it; and upon the last occasion discoursed concerning the loss of it. I shall not repeat any thing said upon these subjects. But proceed to illustrate

SERM. XII.

trate the juſtneſs of our Saviour's doctrine in the text, that a man is no gainer who maketh the largeſt acquiſitions, getteth the whole world, were the thing poſſible, into his poſſeſſion, and *loſeth his own ſoul*; layeth himſelf open to the miſery which I had occaſion to repreſent to you in explaining that expreſſion. This is a ſubject of diſcourſe that one cannot enter upon without concern. No one but will readily yield to the truth and juſtneſs of what our bleſſed Saviour here teacheth, and freely acknowledge that a perſon muſt be an infinite loſer who loſeth his own ſoul, though he ſhould gain the whole world. And yet how many act, and if we may judge of their ſentiments from their actions, how many think, as if there were no truth in this? The ſpirit of the world poſſeſſing them, rendereth temporal acquiſitions the object of their great, I may ſay, their only care and ſollicitude. Theſe they conſider as the only thing ſubſtantial, and look upon what are called the riches of the mind as phantaſtical and of no value. Such things are neglected intirely, and if what concerneth the external ſtate be taken care of and built up, no matter if the ſoul goes to ruin.

If it be thus, it can never be unſeaſonable to diſcourſe upon this moſt intereſting argument; not indeed by vain declamations upon temporal

temporal poſſeſſions, as utterly inſignificant Serm.
and unworthy of the cares or labours of a XII.
wiſe man. Or as if an eaſy and plentiful
fortune in the world, were not a very deſire-
able thing, capable of being improved to ex-
cellent purpoſes, and did not give much joy
and honeſt ſatisfaction. All ſuch declama-
tions are againſt truth and nature, and can
make no impreſſion. Let all the value be ſet
upon wealth and temporal poſſeſſions which
ought to be ſet upon them, as miniſtring
much to the convenience, comfort, and plea-
ſure of life; as ſupporting decency and dig-
nity in it, as attended with an importance
and weight, by which a wiſe man may do
much ſervice to others, and find much plea-
ſure ariſing to himſelf; and by which he hath
ſome ſecurity and defence from the evils and
ſufferings to which deep penury is liable. I
ſay, let all the value which nature teacheth
us to ſet upon temporal acquiſitions, be ſet
upon them; ſtill it will appear a moſt juſt
maxim that ſhould a man *gain the world* and
loſe his own ſoul, he muſt be an infinite loſer.
This is really the caſe, even ſuppoſe there
were no exquiſite pains and ſufferings in that
ſtate which is expreſſed by the loſs of the
ſoul, and if we take nothing into the account
but the loſs of the riches of the mind, and
the pleaſures annexed to them. For it is un-
doubtedly true, that thoſe joys and that hap-

pineſs

Sermon XII. pineſs which are annexed to wiſdom, that is, a good heart and life, are higher and more ſatisfying than any pleaſures which external things can yield; and therefore he who is cut off from the former, and depends only upon the latter, does indeed ſuffer great loſs. This may perhaps appear to many a paradox and incredible, but ſuch as have experience know the truth of it. *Thou haſt put more gladneſs into my heart*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *than they when their corn and their wine moſt abounded.* Yet it may be difficult to prove it to ſuch as have made no trial, and muſt judge, at leaſt, do judge, according to the ſenſations they now have, and not according to what they have not. And if they have a quick and lively reliſh of the pleaſures of ſenſe, and little or no reliſh at all of the pleaſures of the mind, or thoſe which are annexed to virtue and religion, no wonder they ſhould prefer the former infinitely to the latter. Yet if ſuch would ſet themſelves down to think calmly and deliberately, they might ſee reaſon to conclude againſt the language of their preſent ſenſations. They have the teſtimony of all who have made the experiment, to the ſuperior excellency of the pleaſures of the mind in the practice of virtue and religion. They have the teſtimony of all that have gone before them, and of all the good and worthy who are their co-temporaries.

raries. This is a matter in the ſtrongeſt terms declared by the ſervants of God in the Holy Scriptures; and very clearly declared in the writings of the wiſeſt ancients, who laid their foundations in reaſon and nature, and in their own experience. It ſeems likewiſe to be clearly demonſtrable from the nature of things; for that the objects of that delight which is annexed to righteouſneſs of heart and life, are of the moſt excellent kind, does not ſeem to admit of any doubt: And the ſcriptures often appeal to a ſtandard of excellency, which is originally fixed in every man's heart, by which he may be enabled to judge in ſuch matters; and conſtantly ſuppoſe ſuch a ſtandard by which we are to try things that differ. And who will ſay that he hath no rule or ſtandard by which to judge of excellency and beauty in the various objects with which he is converſant? Who will not acknowledge that there is more excellency in an heroic action in the field, than in furniſhing out a luxurious table, in all the variety and pride of it? Who will not acknowledge that there is more excellency in prudence and wiſdom, than in mere animal ſtrength? Who will not own that there is more excellency in the improving converſation of knowing intimate friends, than in the tumultuous uproar of the debauched and licentious? Or, who will not

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SERM. XII. profess to know the difference between greatness of mind and dignity of sentiment, and baseness of spirit? If then the objects of that happiness which is annexed to the practice of virtue are the most excellent, it clearly follows that if there be a taste for them, the pleasure in the fruition must also be the greater. This I would have impressed upon the mind in the strongest and deepest characters, for, indeed, it is of the utmost importance to us; and without an abiding sense of it, we shall be greatly at a loss. He that hath no ear can have no pleasure in the most exquisite musical performances; but could he acquire an ear, they would give him high delight: and so in all other things. The most excellent objects can give us no delight if we have no taste for them; and if we attain to that taste, they will give joy in porportion to their excellency. So the attentive mind, without at present relishing, may be able to demonstrate to itself what the entertainment must be, if it could relish. To take the most signal instance of all for the illustration of this; a man who hath no taste for moral excellency, can have no joy in the contemplation of his Maker. Yet, upon the principles now mentioned, he may demonstrate to his own mind, that this matchless object must give the highest joy to such as can discern the excellency of it; and that what the scriptures

tures ſay concerning the viſion of God, as the Sermon
crown of all felicity, is perfectly according to XII.
truth and nature. As we have the teſtimony
of all, who ſpeak from experience, to the
truth of what I am now illuſtrating, and
have from the nature of things and the frame
of the human mind, what may be called de-
monſtration of this truth; ſo we have a moſt
affecting proof of it, when we turn our
thoughts to the order of beings above us; to
thoſe bleſſed ſpirits which are far ſuperior to
us in power, and perfection, and bleſſedneſs.
Theſe are far ſeparated from, and raiſed above,
all which the children of this world, and who
go on in darkneſs, moſt admire. It would
be diſtreſs to them, no doubt, to be thruſt
down into a ſtate like ours. Yet their hap-
pineſs is far ſuperior to what we can boaſt
of. And what ſhall we ſay more? Is there
any happineſs like to that of the ſupreme
mind? Surely, this is far removed from all
ſenſual joy.

To ſum up this argument, let the children of
vanity and pride put on all the glittering ſhew
they can, and ſhine in all the richeſt gems;
let their dependents be in the greateſt num-
bers, and their power over their fellow crea-
tures be moſt extended; let their acquiſitions
be as boundleſs as can be ſuppoſed, to ſupport
their ſtate, and all things proſper with them.

[illegible] the voluptuous and luxurious compound [illegible] and vary their pleasures as they will; [illegible] be supposed in perfect health to enjoy, and so have the most exquisite relish of them; yet is it unquestionable truth, that the man of wisdom and righteousness enjoys greater happiness, and hath higher and purer joy than they. Taste and imagination may greatly magnify things; but no imagination can create what is not, nor make an object of delight which is in itself less excellent, equal in value to what is more excellent. A man may say to himself, very justly and truly, had I power to frame to myself any external paradise which imagination itself could paint, yet in that I should not be so happy, as I may be in the fruition of those pleasures which spring up in the mind, and that paradise which my maker hath provided for me within; and if these are the words of truth and soberness, may we seriously attend to them, and let no vain imaginations prevail upon us to forsake those principles which lie at the foundation of all true wisdom.

It ought to be farther observed here, that as the possessions and pleasures of the mind are the most excellent, so they are most our own; indeed, they only are what we may call our own: Wherever we are, we find them; whithersoever we go, they attend us,

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in every circumstance and station, and every change of life. Not liable to any accident, to the devastations of time, or the ravages of any enemy. This we cannot say of any thing whatsoever which is external. Indeed nothing of that kind we can call our own. Untoward accidents, the hand of an enemy, or time, may deprive us of them; we may lose our capacities of, or our taste for, the fruition of them; and all our joys may be turned to sorrow; all our triumphant hopes and prospects into most painful disappointment. But grant they should remain in our possession till death, then we must bid them a long adieu; a painful one indeed, if the departing spirit hath no sources of enjoyment or happiness in itself. Thus it appears, that as the pleasures of the mind, especially those which attend virtue and religion, are the most excellent, the most our own, and ever endure; so, upon a comparison, are they far preferable to all other joys, even upon supposition, that the state of the soul which is expressed by *the loss* of it, and at the expence of which the happiness of an external kind was purchased and enjoyed, even upon supposition, I say, that this state had nothing of pain or anguish in it. In one word, the happiness of the good man, in the nature of things, and without any regard to a future judgment or

state of retribution, is greater than that of a bad man: And wisdom would prefer the former to the latter: It must be so, if the objects of the good man's delight be really higher and more excellent, for upon this the whole argument chiefly turns. And I am persuaded the more we think of it, the more we shall be convinced that it is so, in the general state of things, and if we shall suppose the good and the bad equally liable to the common calamities of human life. If the question is put, what way shall I take to make myself the most happy man I can be in this world, wisdom will assuredly answer, Be virtuous and good, maintain piety towards God, self-government and discipline as nature directeth; justice and righteousness, charity and good-will towards mankind; cultivate purity of manners, meekness, humility, and contentment.

But this argument will appear in a far stronger light, when it is considered what is meant by the *loss of the soul*, and what pains and sorrows attend this perdition. These I have endeavoured in some measure to lay before you, in my last discourse upon this subject. The soul is not lost to existence, but lost to happiness; suffereth deeply in that anguish, which a sense of guilt, of moral deformity and vileness, giveth, by which a person becometh

becometh utterly abhorrent and impatient of himself; suffereth under a sense of divine anger, and under all the positive pains and penalties, which infinite wisdom shall see fit to inflict, for the support of God's moral government. Of the miseries of this state the holy scriptures fix neither limit, nor end. And if at this price men acquire the greatest possessions, the whole world, were it possible, it would be indeed a dear purchase. *The world passeth away and the fashion of it*; in a little time all is certainly gone; and the possession of it is succeeded by unutterable woe and distress. While men did possess the world, their joys were not unmixed with sorrows, sorrows perhaps deep and lasting; but the state of pain and misery into which they go, is represented as unmixed with joy. Desire was never satisfied upon earth, desire of what might render *being* happy; but *being* itself becometh, in a state of perdition, an intolerable burthen. Is this the state in which the possession of all the world, were it possible to gain it, shall end? into which the wisdom of this world leadeth men? Surely, then, that wisdom is folly, and these possessions are a curse and punishment. XII.

But hitherto I have considered the whole of a man's possible acquisitions, were they all the world, laid in the ballance with the per-

Serm. XII. dition of his ſoul; and ſhewed that if he ſhould gain the whole world and loſe his ſoul, he muſt be an unſpeakable loſer. But our Saviour's manner of ſpeaking, and the connexion of theſe words with thoſe which went before, leadeth us to conſider the acquiſition of the world as what is the cauſe of the loſs of the ſoul. For ſaith he in the 25th verſe, *for whoſoever will ſave his life, ſhall loſe it; and whoſoever will loſe his life for my ſake, ſhall find it.* Now the meaning of this plainly is, that whoſoever will ſave his life, by renouncing my cauſe, ſhall loſe that *life* which is of the nobleſt kind; and whoſoever will loſe his life, that is, for my ſake, and in ſupport and defence of my cauſe, the ſame ſhall find *life* in the higheſt perfection of it. *Saving life* then, in that manner, is the cauſe of loſing a nobler life, than that which is mortal. And loſing mortal life in acting a right part, is the cauſe of finding life and immortality. And then immediately adds, *for what is a man profited if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?* Intimating that it is ſuch a gaining of the world, as cauſeth the loſs of the ſoul; gaining it by giving up the cauſe of truth and of God; or gaining it by unrighteous methods, which will bring men to the ſame miſerable iſſue of the preſent ſtate. Gaining it, I ſay, by giving up the cauſe of truth and of God as

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the price of it. It was highly expedient that this matter ſhould be ſet in a clear light, and often inculcated upon the diſciples of our Saviour, for they were to be in ſuch a ſtate in this world, and engaged in ſuch ſervices, that if they proved faithful to him, who had called them, in performing their duty, they were likely to be great ſufferers in their temporal intereſts: Perſecution even to the death, and ill uſage in all reſpects, was like to be their lot: And if indeed their hearts were ſet upon a proſperous ſtate and a fortune in this world, it was extreme folly for them to aſſume the character of diſciples of Chriſt. All proſpects of this kind, therefore, they muſt needs give up; yet in doing ſo they would act a wiſe part, for they could be no gainers, if they made a fortune in this world, at the expence of loſing their ſouls. But into this ſtreight men are brought only in times of perſecution for conſcience ſake. However, in times of peace and tranquillity men may hazard the loſs of their ſouls in gaining this world; that is, when they purſue it in the methods of unrighteouſneſs, fraud, and deceit, or extortion, oppreſſion, and violence. Theſe muſt end in the loſs of the ſoul, and ſhew that the gaining a fortune in this world, lieth nearer their hearts than the rights of conſcience, and than life everlaſting; and indeed ſuch ſpeak the ſame

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temper of mind with those who would give up the cause of truth and of God for the sake of temporal emolument.

But may not men in times of peace and liberty, advance themselves in this world consistently with their loyalty to God, and the testimony of their own consciences, and consistently with the performance of all their duties to God and man? Are not honest labour and industry, frugality and temperance, prudence and discretion, the direct way to prosperity and wealth? It is plainly so. And there is nothing in the constitution of the world, or in the government of Providence, which entaileth poverty upon virtue. It is indeed just the reverse; for in *the right hand of wisdom is long life, and in her left hand, riches and honour.* But if these things be so, then, when we are to form a judgment by comparing temporal acquisitions with the life of the soul, and how little the gaining of the whole world, were that possible, signifies, if the soul is lost, we must deduct from the account, all temporal possessions, which may be acquired and enjoyed in perfect consistency with the life and salvation of the soul: And the true state of the case will be this, what profit is there in any acquisitions a man might gain, over and above what he may make in the ways of wisdom and righteousness, if by these *he loses his*

his own soul? How inconsiderable indeed all Sums the gain of injustice, oppression, or fraud, when laid in the ballance with the *loss* of the soul! It hath been shewn, that the acquisition of the whole world, if it could be compassed, is as nothing in this view; how much more may this be said, concerning any poor pittance which may be got by unrighteous methods, and little advantages which the man of craft and dishonesty hath over the *righteous* and good? And how infinitely absurd is it to hazard the loss of the soul upon account of them? Should a prosperous state in the world be utterly inconsistent with purity of heart and life, and that a person, the moment he became a loyal subject of God's kingdom, must find himself in poverty and distress, which was the lot of the first disciples of Christ; yet true wisdom would direct him to make choice of that honest and safe poverty, by which the life of his soul would be ensured; and would pronounce him a fool, if he pursued after the world, and wealth, and greatness in it, at the hazard of his soul. Much more absurd the part, if he risques this hazard merely for what unrighteousness can promise him. But it must appear to be tedious to you to insist much upon an argument so plain and obvious, and that where the least attention is sufficient to fix conviction upon the mind.

But the plainer the truth in this great point is, and the more irreſiſtible the evidence of it, the more wonderful it is that it hath ſo little influence upon mankind; and this is the firſt reflection I ſhall make upon the ſubject. Do we not ſee with what eagerneſs men purſue after acquiſitions in this world, to the manifeſt hazard of their immortal ſpirits? ſome in the worſt methods, and ſo far as they can with impunity from human laws, going on, heedleſs of right and wrong, of honourable or baſe; thinking all well got that can be got with ſafety. Others purſue the ſame end, perhaps with the ſame eagerneſs, but maintain ſuch a regard to character and reputation, as is a check upon them; ſo that they will not do any thing, which is a plain violation of the laws of righteouſneſs; but, however, *Mammon* is the idol to which all their cares, their labours, and every thing in their power is ſacrificed. The intereſts of the ſoul are intirely neglected; and from their temper, their converſation, and the ſtrain of their conduct, one could not imagine that they had the leaſt notion of any ſtate of exiſtence different from this. Such negligence of the ſoul and its intereſts will prove as certainly fatal as the groſſeſt deviations from the laws of righteouſneſs. I do not ſay that the guilt contracted

tracted will be so great, or that the punishment in a future state will be so dreadful. But such a course of life will be as certainly *the loss* of the soul.

Where the spirit of the world hath possession and the government of the man, every thing truly great and generous, every thing sublime and holy, is banished. The views and ends of action, the labours and the enjoyments of life, are all of a piece, all low and grovelling; there is no taste for things excellent; no aspiring of the soul after them. Good and worthy dispositions have no place, and what can the end of such a life be, but the outer darkness so often spoken of by our Saviour? There is no fitness for the heavenly world; there can be no title to it. For these reasons it will appear perfectly just, that our Saviour hath made the spirit of the world the standing and distinguishing character of those, who are utterly alienated from his religion, and who have no portion in him. It is the character of his disciples that *they are not of the world, even as he was not of it*: That have whatsoever they will in this world, and how much soever they possess, they are *poor in spirit*; they are so attempered as if they had little in this world, little or nothing to do with it; their great riches are in the mind, in the acquisitions of virtue, and a

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taste and relish for the pleasures of the world above. But, whether by pursuing the world at the expence of conscience, and violating the laws of righteousness, or at the expence of neglecting the culture of the soul intirely, so that it becometh incapable of that happiness which is intended for the children of wisdom; whether by the one or the other, men *lose their souls*, what doth it profit them if they should gain the whole world? As hath been said, how wonderful is it, that a matter so plain and so interesting should have so little influence upon mankind; and that so many are seen to act a part so little suitable to their frame as moral agents, as creatures accountable to God, and formed for an eternal duration of being; in which it shall be with them according to the temper and conduct they have maintained in this world; that so many pursue after the acquisitions of this world, with so much eagerness, while what is of infinitely greater importance, is utterly neglected!

The cause of this great evil, is our being so much engaged by things sensible and external; sensible objects get an early and easy possession of our minds, and they may be said to take fast hold of them. Sensual pleasure we become first acquainted with, and the appetites planted in us, and necessary in

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our conſtitution, are ſtrong incentives to it: And thoſe objects which make a great appearance in our imagination, as gallery of apparel, magnificence in building and furniture, and ſuch things as theſe, by which men in the higher ranks of life are diſtinguiſhed from others, and make a greater ſhew, are very apt to ſtrike the fancy, ſo as to get poſſeſſion of the heart; and may, by falſe aſſociations of ideas, appear eſſential and fundamental to happineſs. Thus ſenſible external objects ſolicit the mind, and naturally inſinuate themſelves into the heart; and on the other hand, as it requires ſome labour and abſtraction of thought, to converſe, and become familiar with inſenſible objects, they are apt to be greatly neglected; ſo that tho' they are as real as thoſe which are ſenſible, and infinitely more important, yet they make no ſuch impreſſion. And indeed the engagement of the mind to them is not as much ſolicited, nor the inclinations towards them as ſtrong. But, when we once become ſatisfied that this is the infirmity of our preſent ſtate, and have demonſtrated to our own minds, that inviſible objects are as real as thoſe which are ſenſible; how natural is it that we ſhould labour to abſtract the mind from ſenſible objects; that we ſhould check our ſtrong inclinations to them; that we ſhould, by frequently

[illegible] greatly meditating upon them, endeavour to contract a familiarity with invisible things, and act, as being convinced that these are the most, that these are the only substantial things! O! of what advantage would it be to us to accustom our thoughts to those subjects which become us as reasonable creatures, and who, when our present state cometh to a period, are to be inhabitants in the world of spirits! In reality, sense has much too great a power over us; and it prevaileth at the expence of an unnatural depression of the power of reason and faith. Therefore the utmost pains ought to be taken in strengthening this sacred power, and vindicating it from the oppression of the other. For this great service to ourselves we have indeed notable advantages from the religion of our Saviour; who hath given us the strongest assurances of the reality of the invisible world, and hath taught us an utter contempt of this world, when compared to it: Who hath in his own person and life shewed us, that the very highest attainments of human nature, the noblest dignity, the most finished and compleat bliss, have no connection with it, nor dependence upon it; and hath shewed us, that it was one great end of his coming into this world, that he might raise our hearts above it, and set them upon those things *which are above*. This

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is the deſign he moſt particularly purſued. Strong. And pray obſerve how different the language of the Hebrew lawgiver is, with reſpect to the happineſs of the obedient and faithful ſervants of God, and the reward they are to expect, from that of the bleſſed founder of the Chriſtian Church. The former thus addreſſes the Jews, Deut. xxviii. 3. *Bleſſed ſhalt thou be in the city, and bleſſed ſhalt thou be in the field; bleſſed ſhall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increaſe of thy kine, and the flocks of thy ſheep; bleſſed ſhall be thy baſket and thy ſtore; bleſſed ſhalt thou be when thou comeſt in, and bleſſed ſhalt thou be when thou goeſt out; the Lord ſhall cauſe thine enemies that riſe up againſt thee, to be ſmitten before thy face; they ſhall go out againſt thee one way, and flee before thee ſeven ways*; declaring at the ſame time, that if they ſhould be rebellious againſt God, the very reverſe of all theſe things ſhould come upon them. But, the language of the great prophet and head of the Chriſtian Church, is this, Mat. v. 3. &c. *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; bleſſed are they that mourn, for they ſhall be comforted; bleſſed are the meek, for they ſhall inherit the earth; bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled; bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall ob-*

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obtain mercy; blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God; blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Again, to his disciples, Luke xxii. 28. *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my father hath appointed unto me, that you may eat and drink with me at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* And again, Matt. xix. 28. *Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and every one who hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life*; and to add no more, *Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me; In my father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.* John xiv. 1. &c.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

The happineſs which human nature, by its various powers and capacities, is made capable of enjoying in a ſtate of perfection, which will be the portion of the righteous hereafter.

PSALM XXXVI. 8.

They ſhall be abundantly ſatisfied with the fatneſs of thy houſe, and thou ſhalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleaſures.

FROM the fifth verſe of this Pſalm the author celebrateth the goodneſs and mercy of God, and ſhews the happineſs of ſuch as are the objects of his favour. He does this in very high ſtrains. *Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulneſs reacheth unto the clouds; thy righteouſneſs*

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SERM. XIII. *is like the great mountains*, intimating that it is firm and stable, eminent and conspicuous; *thy judgments are a great depth. O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God? therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.* And he shews that the expectations of good men shall be fully answered: *they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life, in thy light shall we see light.* God is the fountain of all good, and from him are all those favours derived which make our present state comfortable, or which are necessary to render our future state happy. The promises which were given to the Israelites, in the law of Moses, related all to temporal prosperity; and the happiness they should enjoy in the land of Canaan, upon condition of their obedience, is much insisted upon. But in the Psalms, and the writings of the prophets, scenes of another kind are opened; and the promises of God to his servants mean something far above this world; even the blessings of a spiritual and an everlasting kingdom. It seems most probable, that these are what the Psalmist intended, when he speaks of *being abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house*; and says, *that*

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with God is the fountain of life, and that in his Sermon
light, his ſervants ſhould ſee light. Expreſſions XIII.
which could not be ſo properly uſed with reſpect to any mere temporal proſperity. If we take the words of the Pſalmiſt in this ſenſe, his way of ſpeaking in the 8th verſe, which may be ſaid to be truly ſublime, giveth us very high ideas of the happineſs of ſuch as dwell in the houſe of God, and are the members of his family. *Thou ſhalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleaſures.* We have imagery of the ſame kind in the book of the Revelation, xxii. 1. *And he ſhewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as chryſtal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb: in the midſt of the ſtreet of it and of either ſide of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* Imagine a river for ever flowing with life and pleaſure, and free acceſs to all to drink of it abundantly, to drink life and joy; and we cannot have an higher repreſentation of happineſs; it is the richeſt abundance. We ſee indeed from innumerable things in the conſtitution of the intellectual and moral world, that it was our Maker's intention his creatures ſhould be happy, even to the utmoſt of their capacity and wiſh. But we need not go far-

Serm. XIII. ther for a proof of this than the frame and conſtitution of our own minds. We ſee in all the powers and faculties of them ſo many inlets to pleaſure and enjoyment; and tho' theſe excellent powers, by the corruption of them, lay us open to great wretchedneſs, yet when they are in a right ſtate, they are a very noble poſſeſſion, and yield very great joy; and ſurely the Being who is the author of them intended this. Whoever hath attended to the paſt diſcourſes upon the powers and affections of the ſoul, muſt have ſeen large proofs of this: and what I intend in the preſent diſcourſe is to illuſtrate this farther, by taking a general view of the mind in that ſtate to which true religion raiſeth it, and eſpecially, in that ſtate, where *that which is but in part, ſhall be done away, and that which is perfect, ſhall come* This will ſhew the value of the ſoul; and point out to Chriſtians how worthy it was of the wiſdom as well as goodneſs of our heavenly Father, by the moſt extraordinary interpoſition that can be imagined, to provide for our ſalvation; and will naturally lead us to ſome reflections which are very ſuitable to the Lord's Supper, the ſolemnity we are this day called to attend.

But before I enter upon theſe heads of diſcourſe, I would ſay a few things concerning a power of the mind which has not yet been par-

particularly noticed, and which ſeemeth to have been by our Maker more peculiarly intended to be an inlet to pleaſure and delight; for this is apparently the main end it ſerves; I mean the imagination; that power by which what is great and wonderful, or lovely and beautiful, giveth us ſo much delight; by which the admired works of the architect, the painter, or ſtatuary, ſo ſtrike the mind; that faculty which hath a kind of creating power, and can form ſcenes to itſelf, of things which never had any real exiſtence; ſcenes of joy or of horror. For as it is, when ſtored with pleaſing images, a fountain of pure pleaſure; ſo when images of dread and terror are drawn in it, it gives moſt exquiſite pain. But in this reſpect it is like all the other powers and faculties of the mind, which, in a right and natural ſtate, miniſter to our entertainment and pleaſure; but when otherwiſe, are the ſources of great miſery. However, by the delight it is capable of miniſtring to us, and which it actually doth miniſter, we ſee what the wiſdom and goodneſs of our Maker intended by it. There is an obvious reaſon why I ſhould not enter into a minute or particular detail of the pleaſures of the imagination; it is enough to obſerve in general, that all are acquainted with that pleaſure we have in ſeeing what is grand and

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Sect. majeſtic, what exciteth wonder and admira-
XIII. tion in us, what is new, and what is in its
kind beautiful; and all who think about ſuch matters muſt be ſenſible, that the delight which ſuch objects afford, muſt be in proportion to the delicacy of imagination. In this there is great variety of degree. No man but has ſome pleaſure in viewing what is grand or wonderful; but it is very little pleaſure which ſome have in this, compared to that of others. Where there is a delicate imagination and nicety of taſte, perſons have indeed very high delight. There is in truth ſuch a thing as rapture in their ſurveying many of the works of nature, and of art. What art can do in the imitation of nature, or in imaginary ſcenes taken from nature, in the way of painting or ſtatuary, affordeth very high entertainment to the diſcerning. But the unſpeakably grand and beautiful works of nature itſelf afford what is much higher. The vaſt expanſe of heaven, furniſhed as it is, ſo glorioufly and with ſuch beauty, muſt ſtrike the imagination of every attentive beholder. The ſun going forth in all his ſplendor and majeſty, *going forth*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *as a Bridegroom from his chamber, and as a ſtrong man rejoiceth to run his race*, diffuſing his light and heat over all the earth. The moon, again, which rules the night, and

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the ſtars of heaven. They make this theatre indeed appear grand and glorious. Great is the deſign, wonderful the execution. But the world our eyes behold, is, very probably, little to that which lies without our knowledge, eſpecially when compared to the inviſible, the world of ſpirits; of which we have but a very imperfect conception: Yet, from what we are taught in the Holy Scriptures, we muſt have very high ſentiments concerning the multitude of inhabitants in it, the ſeveral orders of them; their glory, far exceeding what any mortal can be poſſeſſed of, or what any mortal can conceive. Is it not with great pleaſure the imagination travels thro' theſe works of the Creator? The flowers of the field, the ſparkling gems which are dug out of the bowels of the earth, the birds of the air, the beaſts of the field, give high entertainment to the curious and attentive obſerver; but what is any thing of this ſort, when compared to the grandeur of the heavenly bodies, and that aſtoniſhing contrivance and power with which they are formed and governed? And what, again, is any, the moſt immenſe, greatneſs of any material frame, when compared to the intellectual Creation? to thoſe hoſts of heaven which probably exceed our thoughts and apprehenſions as much in the glory as in the numbers of them? I mention

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these things, not as meaning at all to enumerate the pleasures of the imagination, but rather to explain what I mean; and your own enlargements upon these hints will abundantly convince you, that the imagination is capable of giving us very high entertainment. It is very true, as hath been said, it has this in common with the other powers of the mind, that if it be not managed and improved in a proper manner, and if it is employed in creating images of horror, it will give most exquisite pain; but this can never be the original intention of the Author of nature. By the pleasure it is capable of affording, we see what it was intended for, and what, in a corrected state, and a well-disciplined mind, it will yield.

And this leads me to what I principally intended under this particular, namely, to lead your thoughts to that state, in which nature will be perfect in all the powers of it, and in this amongst the rest. What delight doth imagination, fine and delicate, when the mind is quite at ease, and susceptible of such entertainment, I say, what delight doth a delicate imagination give us in our present state, in the contemplation of what is grand and beautiful, what is new and wonderous, and likewise in its own productions! But think what this delight shall be, when this power

ſhall be in the greateſt perfection, and when ſuch an immenſely great theatre lieth open to the entertainment of it. We have nor thoughts, nor words equal to this. And it is with a pleaſing awe that we conſider, how the viſion of divine glory ſhall then affect the mind; a glory the ſight of which no mortal can bear. A glory ſeen in its brighteſt effulgence, without any terror, and therefore unqueſtionably with the moſt extatic and rapturous delight and joy. No greatneſs, no majeſty like this, therefore nothing ſo pleaſing; pleaſing but not overwhelming; as lovely and deſireable, as great; raiſing and enlarging the ſoul, but cauſing no perturbation in it. And to add no more, this auguſt ſcene which is ſo raviſhing, will be new, and therefore muſt give all that delight which attendeth the contemplation of what is ſo. In a word, an imagination the moſt delicate and ſuſceptible of pleaſure, ſurveying ſuch a ſcene as this, muſt yield extatic joy. But from this very general account we may ſee what our Maker intended for us, when he endowed us with ſuch a wonderous faculty as this; we might conceive *underſtanding, will and affections*, combined together in the human mind without any ſuch power; and in fact, we meet with inſtances in the human race, where there is little of it to be found; men who ſeem to be in a great meaſure ſtrangers to delicacy of

SERM. XIII. imagination and taste; but such minds are in a state which we cannot but account very imperfect. How kind was our Maker to enrich our frame with such a faculty, as an inexhaustible spring of joy and delight to us! A delight which may indeed be called pure, and in which it may be truly said there can be no excess. But having thus spoken particularly concerning the principal faculties of the human soul; let us now take a view of the system in general, and we must see that it is excellent, and was contrived as a seat of the purest happiness and enjoyment.

But surely we are not to form our judgment of this excellent work of our Maker from a state of it, in which it is corrupted and depraved, a state, in which the most wonderful and curious work of God in this world becometh most loathsome and abominable, a state, to which as a created, a finite, and a changeable being, it must in it's nature be liable. We find that creatures of an order far higher than the soul of man, were liable to degeneracy and corruption, and many of them actually lost their innocence and original glory, and fell into the most deplorable state. I say, we must not form our judgment concerning the human soul from a state of degeneracy and moral pollution, which rendereth it abominable. A state of ignorance and dark-

darkneſs in the underſtanding, in which vile and falſe prejudices prevail; in which the light, which XIII. God originally gave men to direct their way, is become darkneſs; in which the *will* is not amenable to the laws of reaſon, nor will hear the voice of conſcience, but is perverſely and obſtinately ſet upon following the devices of a bad heart; in which the affections are all out of order, and no ſubordination and harmony found among them; in which, furious paſſions, like a whirlwind, drive off all that ſtandeth in their way; in which, ſelf is the governing principle, and every thing great and generous is baniſhed; in which, conſcience is dethroned, and the ſenſe of right and wrong, in a great meaſure, loſt to the true purpoſes of it; ſo that the greateſt glory of the human frame is extinguiſhed; in which, the whole ſoul becometh diſorder and confuſion, and at the ſame time liable to the greateſt miſery, from the evil effects of vice, from the oppoſition of luſts warring in the ſoul, from the pains of a condemning conſcience, and from the terrible apprehenſions of God's anger and indignation. In ſuch a ſtate are many found; and, indeed, when men become utterly abandoned, and capable of the very worſt things, nothing in this world is ſo hateful.

But in forming our judgments of this glorious production of the wiſdom and goodneſs

of

of God, let us attend to what he made, and
XIII. plainly designed it for; let us attend to what,
by the means of virtuous and religious dis-
cipline, with the concurrence of the grace of
God, it may be brought to, even in this world;
but especially, let us attend to the appearance
it shall make in a state above all moral imper-
fection and infirmity. Whatever advancement
in happiness the human mind can attain to,
the foundation of it was intirely laid in the
powers and faculties with which God endowed
us in our first frame; whatever we shall pos-
sess through an eternal duration of being, he
conferred on us at first, when he gave us to
be men; and therefore it is but just to esti-
mate his original work according to the value
to which it may be raised and improved. Let
us suppose, then, the understanding enlight-
ened with all that knowledge and wisdom
which is necessary for ordering the conduct of
life aright, as the effect of an inquiry after
truth and duty, carried on with fairness of
mind, and free from corrupt prejudice and
partiality, and in which men are perfectly
willing to learn the truth, whether it be
agreeable to the present inclinations or not;
pursuing that, and that only, with simplicity
of spirit, so far as they can know their own
spirits. Suppose conscience in it's proper
power and strength, and in pursuance of right
judgment

judgment and ſound knowledge, directing the conduct, exerting a ſupreme authority, and allowing no contradiction to it's commands; which therefore are ſubmitted to, though inclination or intereſt ſhould in ſome inſtances loudly reclaim; ſuppoſing the will, under this ſupreme director, right in it's decrees, if I may call them ſo; nothing obſtinate or perverſe, or froward in it, but amenable to the laws of righteouſneſs. I imagine, again, the affections all in a beautiful order, ſtrong enough to ſerve the purpoſes of private and of public happineſs, the great ends of ſelf-love and good-will, but no vehemencies or ſtorms of paſſion allowed, and all under proper reſtraint, capable therefore of giving high pleaſure, but not occaſioning any confuſion, or any pain but what is neceſſary, that the ends of them may be ſerved; and thus the whole man diſpoſed to act the part of a man, and appearing with that dignity and honour which becometh ſuch an order of being, and the lord of this ſublunary creation.

In this view it will be readily allowed that he is of an excellent frame, and that the appearance is indeed lovely. We cannot conſider it without admiring and being pleaſed: and God hath endowed us with a ſenſe of excellency by which we are to judge of this, and to which the holy ſcriptures often appeal as a ſtandard.

We find in reflecting upon this excellency in the human frame, there is great satisfaction. We cannot but be pleased with existence in such an order of being, and account it a most invaluable gift. Lower we are indeed, unspeakably lower, than some orders in the creation of God, of which the scriptures give us an idea; but vastly raised above all the *brutal* orders; and what we are, and what we hope for, may very justly give great delight.

As reflecting upon the excellency of our frame giveth high satisfaction, which it is not only innocent but virtuous to indulge, so when we survey the particular parts and members of this wonderous system, we shall see that there is not one of them but what, in a right state of the mind, tends to our happiness, either as a preservative from evil, or as a source of pleasure; not one of them: so that the kindness of our Maker appeareth in our whole frame, and that he intended we should have a most pleasing enjoyment of the being which, by his sovereign authority, he hath given us. The slightest view of the several powers and affections of the mind, will satisfy us of this. How pleasing are the acquisitions of the understanding in knowledge! what a rich reward, are they accounted, of all the labours which are bestowed in them!

what

what ſatisfaction is there in that dominion a human perſon hath in, and over himſelf, by means of that freedom of will, of which nothing can deprive him! and by which all his actions are properly his own. Attend to the appetites which are planted in us, and all the affections; you ſee, in a right ſtate of the mind, that they are ſo many different ſprings of joy: eſpecially the ſocial affections, by which we are connected with a public, with a country; the affections which are ſuited to the relations of domeſtic life, and to that of ſacred friendſhip. Theſe affections are in themſelves lovely, the exerciſe of them delightful, the monuments raiſed by them always pleaſing to the reflecting thoughts. But above all, thoſe joys which ſpring from an approving conſcience, which are indeed the higheſt of human life. Theſe crown the happineſs of man, and are a noble part of that reward which God hath annexed to the practice of virtue. The perſon of worth finds joy in every good action, and joy in reflecting upon it. It is evident from all this, that our Maker intended to make us excellent, and to make us happy. Nor ought it to be objected againſt this, that often theſe powers and affections, which have been mentioned, are the ſources of great pain and ſorrow. No

doubt

[illegible] this is true; but all know and will [illegible] that this is owing to the corruption of [illegible], and the moral infirmity of the mind. It is not a thing neceſſary, but accidental, by the abuſe of our powers: to ſin it is owing that we know ſo little ſubſtantial joy and pleaſure, and ſuffer ſo great and various evil. Sin is that which dimmeth and obſcureth the excellency and glory of human nature, and turneth it into ſhame. But we look for a ſtate in which ſin ſhall have no place. In the preſent ſtate, notwithſtanding all the labours of our diſcipline, we come ſhort of that ſtandard of perfection which God hath planted in every man, as that, at which he ſhould conſtantly aim. He that hath got the higheſt, is ſtill inferior to what he ought to be, and findeth reaſon to complain. But in the eternal age, things in this reſpect will wear another face. Human nature, free from moral infirmity, will be perfect in all its powers, open to the ſtreams of pureſt joy at every inlet, and knowing nothing that giveth ſorrow or pain; when moral perfection and happineſs, which the God of nature hath connected together, ſhall, in inſeparable conjunction, be enjoyed in the higheſt reliſhes of them, every creature receiving from the fountain of life to the utmoſt of his enlarged capacity.

pacity. To such an issue will the father of mercies conduct the affairs of his servants at last.

But when we consider the high excellency and value of the human soul, this naturally leadeth our thoughts to what the Father of all hath done for our redemption from a state of guilt and misery, and to raise us to the enjoyment of that happiness of which he hath made us capable. He hath interposed, in a manner the most extraordinary which can enter into the human imagination, by sending his only begotten son into the world, and *giving him up to the death for us all.* But when we consider the excellency of the human soul, the happiness of which it is capable, and the misery that had been entailed upon it by corruption and guilt, we shall not wonder that the wisdom of God should interpose for the redemption of it, in any manner, by which that should be most effectually accomplished. If indeed the Father of mercies hath a *desire to the works of his hands,* no work of his in this world was so much to be regarded as mankind; nothing of so great importance in the creation. It is the value and excellency of the human soul which justifieth the wisdom of such an interposition as that of the son of God, crucified and slain for us. As, on the one hand, we are assured that

God

Sect. God doth nothing in vain, and that there
XIII. must be in the end he hath in view, an importance, which is in proportion to the means which he useth to serve it; which indeed giveth us an exceeding high idea of the value of the human soul, when such a method is taken for the redemption and recovery of it; so, on the other hand, when we look into the value of the human immortal spirit, and the excellency of the workmanship, we cannot but see that there is an end worthy of the means. While we adore the infinite goodness of God, manifested in this great work of redemption, we see at the same time what perfectly approveth the wisdom of it. The mind rests, with wonderful satisfaction, in the notice taken of the human kind in the creation of God; and this is a notice not at all capricious and without reason; but, in truth, suitable to the station and rank it holds in the works of God, and to the excellencies of the human immortal spirit. And though we ought to be deeply humbled, and to think meanly of ourselves, as guilty creatures; yet we err, if we think at all meanly concerning our souls as the offspring of the Supreme Being. Whatever we have made ourselves, yet surely God hath made us originally of such importance, as to justify the wisdom of all that attention which he hath given to us, and that

care

care which he hath taken of us. As the gift of Christ, and what he hath done and suffered for us, is the mirror in which the goodness of God most gloriously shineth; so it does most affectingly display the worth and excellency of the human soul.

I shall conclude with some observations, which I hope may be useful, and tend to raise in us becoming sentiments *as the redeemed of the Lord.*

First, let us consider, that every individual hath a very noble possession given him in the possession of himself. It is a possession which he holdeth for ever by the surest tenure. It is capable of the greatest and most valuable improvement: And when men have attained to that improvement, they must find themselves extremely happy. Let us, therefore, be content with our state as men. We may be *in heaviness* at present, *if need be, by manifold temptations*; afflictions, in our bodies, circumstances, relatives, may be very heavy; still we continue the offspring of God; still we are possessed of the spark of immortal life which we have from heaven; still we have the excellent powers of our minds. Is not a foundation laid here for contentment and tranquility of mind? Whatever is merely external, and liable to time, and chance, or adverse events, has not, cannot

Sermon XIII. have, a very near relation to mind. Prosperity in the outward estate doth not make it more excellent or worthy; adversity in the outward state doth not render it less excellent and worthy; if enjoyment and happiness of the highest kind are supposed to wait upon excellency and worth, and bear a proportion to it, that kind of happiness is not at all measured by the external state. And let it be observed, that all the care and pains taken about the outward state, however natural, however necessary, and even virtuous and most commendable, yet terminates in mortal life, as the great end of it; the support of life, conveniencies, and comforts, and dignity, and decency, in it. And if this be all, as evidently it is, then surely these ought not to be our chief cares; but such things as relate intimately to the man, that is, the immortal spirit. The attaining to sound knowledge, and discernment between truth and falsehood, between expedient and inexpedient, between right and wrong; attaining to a right state of the heart and affections, that they may be set upon their proper objects, and in their proper order; attaining to self-government, by which the whole soul shall be subjected to conscience; and in consequence of all this, to such a fixed and permanent relish of things celestial, as shall

make

make them to us infinitely preferable to all things upon earth. When the man is thus disciplined and improved, he is to himself a most valuable poſſeſſion, and in which there is reaſon in every ſtate to be content. Thus a good man, as *Solomon* ſpeaketh, may be ſuppoſed to *be ſatisfied from himſelf*. And, indeed, if there is no ſuch ſatisfaction from within, there is but little conſideration to be had of what is from without. It may be truly ſaid to be *vanity*. And when life cometh to a period, this will appear to all. But the perſon enriched with good affections carrieth his treaſures along with him, and ſhall flouriſh, as in eternal youth, ſo in eternal bliſs.

Secondly, We may ſee that the high ſtrains in which the goodneſs of God, and his unchangeable diſpoſition to communicate perfection and happineſs, are celebrated in the Holy Scriptures, are not at all romantic, or without reaſon and reality. In him is the *fountain of life*, from him as the inexhauſtible fountain, *rivers of pleaſures* eternally flow; and you may ſee he has ſo made us, that every power and faculty, and every affection of the ſoul, is an inlet to that pure and ſubſtantial pleaſure. This you ſee is evidently the caſe. As if the thirſty and parched body were made to drink of the refreſhing ſtream

SERM. XIII. at every pore, so the mind is made to drink of pleasure by every faculty. Did not the Being that made us so, intend that we should be full of bliss? Does not our wondrous frame evidently speak this? How then ought we to rejoice at the goodness of our heavenly Father! *A river of pleasure!* How great the idea? But far from being greater than the reality. And here I cannot avoid taking notice of the vast difference there is between the provision made for human happiness, properly speaking, and for the pleasure of meer animal life; that pleasure, I mean, which is entirely sensual. This is confined to the few senses; lieth in a very narrow compass, and in the gratification of a very few appetites, which the brutal orders have as well as the human kind. But the inlets to the happiness and pleasures of the man are much more in number, and more various; and as the happiness intended for him is of an higher kind than any of the brutal orders can taste, so it is unspeakably greater with respect to the variety of it. But let all our meditations and reflections of this kind terminate in the blessed original infinite goodness, and those high praises which are so justly due to it.

And lastly, let us remember him, with the utmost gratitude, who hath, at the expence

of

of the greateſt ſufferings to himſelf, executed for us the counſels of divine goodneſs towards us; XIII. Him, in whom all the father ſhineth; him, *whoſe glory we have beheld as the glory of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth. In whom we, with open face beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory, even as by the ſpirit of the Lord.*

SERMON XIV.

The greatneſs of God and his works, his univerſal providence, and the happineſs he muſt enjoy from the execution of the glorious deſign.

ISAIAH XL. 15.

Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as a ſmall duſt of the ballance; behold, he taketh up the iſles as a very little thing. And Lebanon *is not ſufficient to burn; nor the beaſts thereof ſufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him leſs than nothing, and vanity.*

FROM the 12th verſe, the prophet entereth upon a repreſentation of the greatneſs and power of the true God, and of the vanity of the Gods of the nations

whom compared to him; which subject he pursueth to the end of this chapter, and in XLI. the greatest part of the following; and indeed the prophet speaketh in strains suitable to his subject. *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? And meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a ballance? Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his Counsellor hath taught him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed him? And taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed him the way of understanding?* Again, 18th verse, *To whom will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman maketh a graven image; and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold; and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation; chooseth a tree that will not rot. He seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth; and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; that bringeth the princes to nothing;*

Saviour, *he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.* XLVI. Again, 28th verſe, *Haſt thou not known? Haſt thou not heard, that the everlaſting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not nor is weary? There is no ſearching of his underſtanding.* Such language and expreſſion become the majeſty of the true God. This is a ſubject of meditation which muſt be always pleaſing to well-diſpoſed minds; and, as I ſhall endeavour in this diſcourſe to ſhew you, is exceedingly uſeful. In my text, all the nations upon earth are repreſented *as a drop of a bucket*, and are accounted *as the ſmall duſt of the ballance*; things of no account or eſtimation, and not at all regarded. What is one drop of the bucket, or the ſmall duſt of the ballance? So inconſiderable, that the ballance is not in the leaſt affected by it. Nay, *all nations are as nothing, and they are counted to him leſs than nothing*, if any thing could be leſs, *and vanity*. Poor mortals ſpeak of the greatneſs of princes and empires in very lofty expreſſions, according to their meaſures, and their imaginations; but what are they to him? What to his majeſty and greatneſs, to whom the whole expanſe of heaven is only as a curtain and a tent to dwell in? Let us particularly conſider this. What are all the nations upon this globe, what this globe itſelf, when compared with the greatneſs of the works of

God

God in this universe? nay, what, when compared even with this one stellar system of ours, I mean our sun, and the planets which move regularly around him. But what, again, is this system, what the sun with all his planets which attend him, when compared with the vastness of those works which fall under even our notice? What a little thing is our whole system when considered in this view? So little, that were it entirely annihilated, to speak so in the works of the supreme being, it would hardly be missed. Supposing the fixed stars be each a center of such a system, how great the number, and how magnificent the frame? But still farther, how little is all which we can comprehend of the works of God, when compared with immensity of space; a thing without any possible limit or bound, the dimensions of which, numbers added to one another without end, can never equal. I say, how inconsiderable all the works of God, that we know any thing of, when compared with this immensity, and that *being* who is every where in immense space, and who fills it. Here our thoughts are lost. *Who can by searching find out God, who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?* But if what we know of the works of God, be indeed as nothing to immensity; and yet any particular system around us, is but an inconsiderable thing, when compared to that part of the works of God which

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falleth under our notice, and observation; and our little world but little considerable, when compared with the intire system of which it is a part; then surely may it be truly said, that the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and accounted as the small dust of the balance. They are as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. Considered in this light, what are the conquests of a *Nimrod*, or *Nebuchadnezzar*, a *Cyrus*, an *Alexander*, or a *Cæsar*? Nay, what is *Europe* or *Asia*, *Africa* and *America*, though, were the thing possible, they were all united in one empire, and subjected to one power? quite inconsiderable indeed, and less than nothing. To say all at once, in the immensity of space there is infinite capacity of receiving Being; and in omnipotent power there is an infinite capacity of producing it. This is the utmost length that human imagination can go. And, if this is the case, who can possibly set any limit to the works of God? Well may it be said, that *he taketh up the isles as a very little thing*. Well may it be said, that, to suit his greatness, the forests *of* Lebanon *are not sufficient to burn; nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering*. But all which hath been hitherto said respecteth only the material world; this is indeed the lowest and least significant work of God; and which we could not imagine would have been brought into ex-

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exiſtence at all, but for the ſake of the world of life. In a living creature we ſee more excellency than in any poſſible ſyſtem, however extended, of meer dead matter. But when the mind turns to the contemplation of the world of life, the thoughts are immediately called off from the inferior brutal creation, to the higher orders, who are endowed with intellectual, eſpecially with moral powers. Of this kind, though in the loweſt rank, is the human race, to whom this little globe is given for an habitation. How vaſt their numbers in our age, upon the face of the earth, or who live upon the waters! How much greater the numbers, who have exiſted in all ages, from the beginning, and who ſhall come into exiſtence to the end of the world! And what ſhall we ſay concerning all the worlds which God hath made? Are they without life, without inhabitants, without inhabitants of the rational and moral kind? No, ſurely. How inexpreſſible then the number of them! How great that family of God! Who can number his hoſts? But we have reaſon to think, and the Holy Scriptures have taught us, that there are orders of being far higher than thoſe which are ſo connected with matter, as the human mind is; pure ſpirits, probably not having their habitation fixed in any one material ſyſtem, any one planet or world, but

but rather having all the vaſtneſs of the universe for their abode, in which they execute the Divine commands. Of theſe the Holy Scriptures ſpeak, as being in vaſt numbers, *thouſands of thouſands miniſter unto him, ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtand before him.* Dan. vii. 10. Who can ſay what an hoſt that may be? Who can ſay what numbers of ſuch, through the whole univerſe? We cannot but think of it as vaſt, ſince theſe are the moſt excellent creatures, and in whom the Creator moſt delighteth; and we are ſure, that the production of an Angel, is as eaſy to omnipotence, as the forming the very loweſt creature. This wonderfully raiſes the imagination concerning the number of the *Divine armies*, as the ſcripture ſpeak. But then we ſee, in the orders of being which God hath made, a gradation from lower to higher, from leſs excellent to more excellent and perfect. And as we are taught that the Angels are a more excellent order than the human kind, ſo we are taught that in the world of ſpirits there are orders riſing above one another. Thus we read of archangels, of thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. Nor is there any thing to hinder our conceiving, that ſome orders of Angels are as much exalted above others, in their powers, and in their ſtation, as the lower orders are

exalted

exalted above the human kind. But how high the gradation may go, who can tell? As in conſidering the extent of the material world, immenſity lay before us, ſo here infinity lies before us. Infinite the diſtance between any ſuppoſed degree of power and perfection, which we know to be actually communicated, and the ſupreme, abſolute and independent perfection: And how high in this ſcale, to which imagination itſelf cannot fix a certain limit, ſome creatures may be exalted, who can tell? Or what numbers of them? However, all theſe, throughout the univerſe, whatever their numbers, whatever their excellency, are the family of God; they are his miniſtry and ſervants. In this view of things, what and how utterly inconſiderable is the human kind? Surely *all nations are* indeed *as the drop of the bucket, or the ſmall duſt of the ballance*; the influence of which is not in the leaſt perceptible. *The inhabitants of the earth are* in truth *as graſshoppers*. O! Who can ſpeak the greatneſs of this Being? The greatneſs of his works? What is the ſon of man who is a worm? Who, one would think, might be intirely neglected, and loſt in the works of God.

But it is not ſo. For in the ſecond place, God conſtantly governeth the world which he hath made. And as all creatures from the

XIV.

SERM. XIV. highest to the lowest, have their subsistence in the power of God; so they are each of them noticed by his Eye and governed by his Providence; that is, by the immediate energy of his own power, or by agents which are under his direction, and who cannot act but by his power. It is pleasing to a good mind, to think that this great article of our faith is established, and confirmed, by the best and highest improvements which have been made in reason, and the knowledge and study of nature; and that those who understand most, and have made the greatest progress in their enquiries, ascribe activity only to mind, as that in which matter hath no share; making it apparent, that to speak of the powers of matter, and of a necessity under which they are, or a chance by which changes are produced in it, is a language which really hath no meaning at all. God reigneth; in his infinite mind, the plan of this universe was formed; by his power the glorious design was carried into execution. He regulates all causes, and all effects, and will never cease to take care of the world which he has made. But we evidently see there are certain fixed rules and measures by which the energy of the Supreme Being is exerted; these we commonly call the laws of nature; for example, bodies being carried towards centers,

and

and moving slower or faster as they are more or less distant from these; that waters should run down, that vapours should ascend; that we should have summer and winter, spring, and harvest; that the earth should bring forth vegetables, and that men should reap from it the same kind they sow; that animals should be dependent upon food for nourishment, and that their offspring should be of the same species with themselves: And so in innumerable instances. It is plain there is a necessity that these things should be all regulated according to a stated course and order, or the world would be utter confusion, and we should not at all know how to conduct ourselves.

Now, that care of the Supreme Being, by which this general order or stated course of things is preserved, may not unfitly be called a general Providence: And it will not be amiss to consider more particularly the great extent of it. It taketh place not only in the frame of the universe, the regular motion of the vast bodies which compose it, by which we have spring and harvest, summer and winter, day and night; not only in the fruitfulness of the earth, and the state of the several kinds of animals which inhabit it, and the manner in which the kinds and the individuals are preserved; but in human affairs like-

[illegible]; we know that wholesome food will [illegible] us, and that poison will destroy us; and we know too, *that the hand of the diligent maketh rich*, and *that want is like to come upon the slothful as an armed man*. Again, where we see a man temperate, honest, and just, kind, and benevolent, we expect, that if some particular cause do not obstruct it, he will enjoy health, esteem in his neighbourhood, and have a peaceful possession of himself. Where, on the contrary, we see luxury and vice prevail, where we see men unrighteous, cruel, and perfidious, and of malevolent spirits, we conclude such men will be the aversion of the neighbourhood, that they will suffer deeply in their health and in their minds, and become very miserable. This is the tendency of their conduct, according to the established course of things which the Supreme Being hath fixed, and will maintain: In these respects, *as a man soweth so he shall reap*. The same wisdom, which hath appointed an order of nature in the material world, hath established an order of causes and effects in human affairs, according to which we see things generally go on. But it is particularly pleasing to observe, how minutely this Providence of the Supreme Being descendeth, even to the notice and direction of the smallest and most inconsiderable things.

Our

Our Saviour, and this according to the juſteſt Serm. philoſophy that ever appeared in the world, XIV. repreſenteth his heavenly father as clothing the lillies of the field, and as feeding the ravens; as doing this as with his own hand; and he teacheth, that a ſparrow cannot fall to the ground without his providence; and argues from this, that if he attends to theſe things, which are comparatively of the ſmalleſt account, ſurely his providence will not neglect his creatures of a nobler order; *Fear not therefore, ye are of more value than many ſparrows.* And he tells his diſciples, *that the very hairs of their heads were all numbered.* Luke xii. 7.

Thus, tho' God is ſo great, *He humbleth himſelf to behold things which are* done *in heaven* and *upon earth*, and takes notice even of the loweſt orders of creatures, and of every individual. For, beſides that general order of cauſes and effects which he hath eſtabliſhed, and maintaineth from age to age, there are plain footſteps of a particular providence regarding individual perſons; by which I mean his notice and care of individuals, conſidered as ſuch; his purſuing particular intentions concerning them, and bringing to paſs events reſpecting them, which are the effects of a ſpecial determination, and volition of his, and different from the general courſe of things; ſeeing

SERM. XIV. seeing that might have been carried on, without any such determinations concerning the individual, or any of those events which come to pass in pursuance of them. Thus, God so ordered it, that *Moses*, instead of being cast into the river to perish, should be laid amongst the flags upon the brink of it; and that *Pharaoh*'s daughter should be the first that found and took notice of him. So, again, by an occurrence merely accidental, or by a sudden thought, of the rise of which no account is to be given, a person may be diverted from taking passage in a ship which perisheth in the voyage; or by some accidental thought, or accidental event, one may be directed to go out of an house, the minute before it falls. A thousand such instances may be suggested, in which things take turns quite unaccountable and unexpected, upon which very important events may depend; and what is here said concerning individual persons may be applied to families and kingdoms, in which God is the Supreme Ruler. By the interpositions of providence things are so governed and conducted that his purposes are pursued and carried into execution; and manifold are the means by which this may be effected. How important the events which arise out of things which appear to us purely accidental! How many which are owing to thoughts and coun-

ſels ſuggeſted to the heart of man, in all Serm.
which God preſides! Every man muſt be ſen- XIV.
ſible that many thoughts have come into his mind without his ſeeking, and when he was not at all attending to the ſubject of them, upon which perhaps very important conſequences have followed; not to ſpeak of the inſpiration of the Almighty, in the ſtrict and proper ſenſe of that word, which is an interpoſition of quite a different kind from that now mentioned. *Solomon* was ſo full of this argument, that he tells us, Eccleſ. ix. 11. *The race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong, nor bread to the wiſe, nor riches to men of underſtanding, nor favour to men of ſkill, but time and chance happeneth to all* men. But eſpecially when we conſider a moral government conſtantly exerciſed by the Supreme Being over moral agents, it is unqueſtionable that there muſt be, by the Supreme Ruler, a particular notice of individuals; and that as he appointeth to each his diſcipline, ſo he is pleaſed or diſpleaſed with his conduct; and accordingly will interpoſe to teſtify this by ſuitable rewards or puniſhments: And here no general rules will hold, for every individual *muſt bear his own burthen*, and the things concerning him be adjuſted and adapted to his ſtate and conduct.

I have more largely inſiſted on all this, to

Serm. XVI. ſhew that, though the works of God are ſo vaſt, beyond all our imaginations, yet there is no reaſon to apprehend that the leaſt creature is neglected by his Providence. His eye is every where upon every creature; and every object whatſoever as much attended to, as if there were no other object beſides to engage attention. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for us.* We can have no idea of ſuch infinite comprehenſion of mind; but we ſee it is, and muſt be in the governor of the univerſe; and to think of him, comprehending in one view all objects throughout the immenſity of ſpace, attending to, and governing all, without difficulty, without labour, without any confuſion, who, but muſt be diſpoſed to adore? Who, but muſt feel in his mind the very higheſt veneration? But, in the

Third place, Theſe reflections upon the greatneſs of God and of his works, which are the production of ſuch wiſdom, and power, and goodneſs, (indeed, it is this laſt which gave birth to the deſign,) naturally lead our thoughts to a ſubject great and pleaſing; namely, the happineſs of the Supreme Being in his perfections and works, a ſubject, indeed, as little to be comprehended by us, as we can find out the Almighty unto perfection. Yet we cannot avoid the thought, how high, and in all reſpects perfect, the felicity

of

of the firſt cauſe of all things muſt be; and Serm.
love to God will make a right heart rejoice XIV.
and exult in it. The Holy Scriptures repreſent him as *rejoicing* in all his works, and it is the moſt natural repreſentation which can be; and the author of the hiſtory of the Creation tells us, *that God looked upon his works, and they were all very good*; they anſwered his intention, and they were the objects of his approbation. They are indeed worthy of him; great beyond expreſſion, and excellent. They diſplay his glory in a manner that muſt for ever amaze the whole intellectual creation. But who can conceive the pleaſure, if ſuch a word may be uſed, which the creating and governing mind muſt have in them; in works ſo grand, ſo beautiful; and in which his moſt glorious deſign is crowned with unfailing ſucceſs. As we have no other way of riſing to any idea of the Divine perfections, but by attending to the powers and faculties of our own minds, and what paſſeth in them; ſo we have no other way of framing any idea of the Divine felicity. And we cannot err in aſcribing to him what we call happineſs, when it is evident what we aſcribe to him, is of ſuch a nature as not to be incompatible with his perfections. Now, we know, that when a moral agent hath done an action wiſe and good, he hath much pleaſure in reflect-

Serm. XIV.

ing upon it, and the principles and motives from which it ſprung; and if he has ſucceſs attending his endeavours, and events anſwer to his deſire, he hath a great additional joy. Should we ſuppoſe him to purſue a courſe of ſuch good and ſucceſsful actions through life, without once erring, or being unhappy in the event, he muſt have an enjoyment of himſelf that may be ſaid to be compleat, and with which, in truth, pleaſure of any other kind can hardly be compared. But ſhould we ſuppoſe him in a ſtation and circumſtances, in which his good ſpirit and good actions gave happineſs, not only to his relatives, and thoſe who are about him, but to all the neighbourhood, his ſatisfaction, in being the inſtrument, in the hand of Providence, to communicate ſuch happineſs, muſt be ſtill greater.

To proceed, ſuppoſe him, with ſuch a ſpirit, at the head of a great empire or kingdom, making thouſands and ten thouſands happy, without once erring in any one ſtep of his adminiſtration; how joyful and pleaſing muſt his reflections be! Much more, if he could, like the light of the ſun, diffuſe joy and bleſſedneſs over the whole face of the earth! But may we not raiſe our views to higher orders of Being? Suppoſe an angelic power endowed with abilities to preſide over

a world,

a world or a ſyſtem, as the ſervant and mi- SERM.
niſter of Divine power, and acting his part XIV.
always aright, always with ſucceſs and rejoic-
ing in the conſtant gratification of the no-
bleſt affections; how happy muſt he be! But
what is all this to Divine felicity, in the en-
joyment of Divine abſolute perfections, and
all the glorious productions of them? God
ſeeth the immenſe theatre of this univerſe, of
his own production, the contrivance of his
wiſdom, and the work of his power. He
ſees it beautiful, as grand, and the moſt per-
fect ſymmetry and harmony in it. He ſees
every part anſwering the original deſign; he
ſees it ſhall continue to do this to eternity. How
muſt he rejoice, as the ſole voluntary cauſe
of all this glorious production! Eſpecially,
in thoſe multitudes of moral agents, that are
capable of bearing a reſemblance of himſelf,
and of taſting high happineſs, indeed an hap-
pineſs which, in kind, may properly be ſaid
to be like his own! How muſt he rejoice in
theſe!

Nor let it be objected, that in the univerſe
there is much irregularity, and many evils
and ſufferings. For what to us hath the ap-
pearance of irregularity, may be, nay, I may
ſay aſſuredly is, neceſſary to the harmony of
the whole; and part of a deſign, which was
the beſt and worthieſt which could be fram-

ed. As for thoſe ſufferings which the ſubjects of a moral government bring upon themſelves, they are as neceſſary as that government itſelf; which is indeed the glory of God's creation, and without which, and thoſe orders of creatures, which are made to be the ſubjects of ſuch a government, the univerſe muſt have been nothing to what it is now. An univerſe without angels, without men, without any ſuch orders of intellectual and moral beings, what would it have been? But the glorious head and regent of that vaſt body, which is all harmony, all order, and beauty, and in which no part of the grand deſign hath failed, or ever can fail, what happineſs muſt he taſte! May we aſcribe to him what we call joy? His joy muſt be moſt perfect and compleat. To theſe obſervations, the grand repreſentation of the prophet, in the words of my text, naturally lead our thoughts; and I ſhall now conclude the diſcourſe with ſome reflections which are of a practical nature.

Firſt, if our minds are rightly impreſſed with a ſenſe of the Divine greatneſs and majeſty, how little muſt what we are apt to call great upon earth appear in our eye! How little conſiderable thoſe diſtinctions upon which ſome are apt to value themſelves above other! Diſtinctions of parentage and birth, of ſtation, of wealth and luſtre; all of which

do really ſink into nothing in our eye! We ſpeak of great kings, great empires, great miniſters of ſtate, great armies; alas! Are not all nations before God, *as the drop of the bucket, and the ſmall duſt of the balance; leſs than nothing, and vanity?* Indeed, the diſtinction of ſtation and power God hath originally intended, and by his Providence maintaineth. And it is neceſſary for the order and well-being of human ſociety, that a proper regard ſhould be had to them. But it is too common a thing, and which indeed ſpeaketh a kind of littleneſs of mind, to value them too highly; it ſpeaks ſuch a littleneſs in the poſſeſſor, who valueth himſelf highly upon them, and likewiſe in thoſe who pay the extravagant regard to him which he expecteth. And this is an infirmity that, in truth, is productive of much evil, and is the ſource of that adulation of the great, which is one of the moſt miſchievous of all things. It will be a noble preſervative from this vice, to preſerve upon the mind juſt impreſſions of the Divine greatneſs, and of how little account all ſuch diſtinctions are, when compared to it. They will, indeed, viewed in this point of light, almoſt quite vaniſh. When we have learned to pay that regard to the Supreme Being, which is infinitely due to him, then we ſhall learn to pay a proper regard to the ſtations

and powers by which any of our fellow mortals are diſtinguiſhed. External appearances will not greatly move us: and the greateſt will no otherwiſe be regarded than as men; of whom Job xxv. 6. ſaith, *What is man, who is a worm, and the ſon of man who is but as a worm?* whoſe pomp and glory will ſoon fade and die. *His breath goeth out, he returneth to his earth, and that very day his thoughts periſh*, Pſalm cxlvi. 4.

Secondly, Let us in all things meekly and affectionately ſubmit to the Supreme Ruler; in humble obedience to his laws, and in unreſerved reſignation to his Providence. Who are we that we ſhould rebel againſt the Supreme Lord of the univerſe? That we ſhould thwart and contradict his will, or murmur againſt any ſtep of his adminiſtration? Think of his majeſty and greatneſs, think of his works done in the greateſt wiſdom and the moſt perfect goodneſs, think that the events which he commandeth are parts of the moſt excellent deſign which could be framed: And ſhall we murmur againſt, or ſet ourſelves to thwart it? No; with the greateſt humility, and moſt affectionate reſignation, let us ſubmit to him. Ever accounting that what is neceſſary, what is good for the great whole over which God preſideth, cannot be bad, nor ought to be accounted ſo by us. This is a

thought

thought much insisted on by some of the ancients, and is a very just one; and, indeed, we not only ought, but if we think at all seriously, must be ashamed of any the least disposition to murmur at any particular event, which God sees necessary for the carrying into accomplishment his great design. *Job* speaketh much to this purpose, with great elevation and justness of sentiment, and from the greatness of God, of his designs and works, inferreth the absurdity of contradicting his will in any instance. And shall indeed, the potsherds of the earth *say to him who made them, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay?* and ought not that power to be absolutely submitted to, when it is known to be under the direction of the most perfect righteousness and unerring wisdom?

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Thirdly, Let us put our trust in God. We see his power, we see his understanding. For there is nothing too hard for him to effect. Happy for us we know the true God, who as he is infinitely wise and powerful, so is most gracious and merciful. In him let our confidence be placed: And let it be our first and principal care, to comply with those terms, upon which his favour towards us, as the subjects of his moral kingdom, may be expected; that so our confidence towards him may

may be rational and well-grounded. If such is our state, we cannot raise our expectations too high from his power, and unchangeable benevolence. How easy is it for him to make us happy, beyond and contrary to our expectations! Especially, as Christians, it becomes us to put our trust in him. In Jesus Christ, we have a pledge of his goodness and mercy to us, which is, in truth, the most wonderous of all his ways; by him we have many precious promises and express declarations of the Divine counsels and intentions concerning us; by which our hearts are assured, that however things may go with his servants in this world, it will be eternally well with them in the next. In Jesus Christ, and the gospel-covenant, let us rejoice, while we put no confidence in the flesh.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

Of the diſſolution of the material ſyſtem, and the final conſummation of all things.

PSALM CII. 25.

Of old haſt thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the Heavens are the work of thine hands; they ſhall periſh, but thou ſhalt endure; yea, all of them ſhall wax old like a garment; as a veſture thou ſhalt change them, and they ſhall be changed; but thou art the ſame, and thy years ſhall have no end, the children of thy ſervants ſhall continue, and their ſeed ſhall be eſtabliſhed before thee.

WHATEVER vain men have ſaid concerning this world's having been without beginning, or concerning the frame of it as the production of chance, or of neceſſity, we have learned from the ſcriptures of truth, that the heavens and the earth, and

Sect. XV. and all the hoſts and inhabitants of them, were made by the word of God's power, and that they are his voluntary production, in purſuance of worthy and excellent deſigns: These ſame things we are primarily taught by the light of nature and reaſon; and have the ſtrongeſt evidence, I may ſay, demonſtration, that the univerſe is the work of an original intelligent cauſe, of omnipotent power and perfect goodneſs. We ſee likewiſe clearly, that the frame of this world could not have been without beginning, and indeed have ſtrong proof, that, in compariſon of ſuch a duration, our globe it is but a recent production. This appeareth from many things in nature, which ſeem plainly to ſhew that this world was not intended or made for perpetuity, and that it hath in it what portendeth diſſolution and end. But it appeareth eſpecially from the limited antiquity of hiſtory, of arts and ſciences, and of kingdoms, and the works of men upon this earth. And as we know the world muſt have had a beginning, and are clearly informed, in the holy ſcriptures, concerning the production and the age of it; ſo we know from the ſcriptures, that it ſhall come to an end; not that the matter of which it conſiſteth ſhall be annihilated, for this is not ſaid in ſcripture, nor is it at all probable; but that the preſent frame ſhall be diſſolved, and all the works of nature and

and of art, which our eyes now behold, perish. Sect. XV.

The Apostle *Peter* hath set before us the very manner in which this great event shall come to pass. 2 *Pet.* chap. 3. ver. 9. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.* This is a subject of meditation which is indeed great and interesting, and which may be improved to excellent purposes for our edification. It is very natural for believers to place themselves, in their imaginations, in the state of eye-witnesses of that event, and as looking upon nature in this catastrophe of it.

When it shall come to pass, is known only to the parent of the universe, who hath taught us, that *it is not for us to know the times and seasons, which he* hath kept *in his own power.*

But

SERM. XV. But we are over and over aſſured, that the end will come, of the heavens and the earth; probably of this whole planetary ſyſtem. The heavens paſſing away with a great noiſe, and the elements melting with fervent heat. It is moving to think that all the works of nature and of art ſhall be at once deſtroyed. We ſee in the works of nature admirable contrivance, great excellency and beauty; in the ſtate of the earth and ſea, ſo admirably adapted for the dwelling and ſubſiſtence of ſuch multitudes of inhabitants; and in the regular changes and revolutions of nature, moſt wiſely and happily adjuſted to the great purpoſes for which the world was made. When we look upon the face of the earth, what wonders do we ſee in the vegetable productions of it! What variety, what beauty! What magnificence in many of them! How uſeful are they! How fit for the purpoſes of life which they were intended to ſerve! But how much greater the wonders in the animal world! Who can tell the various kinds of living creatures which have their dwelling upon the earth, or in the deep waters, or who fly at their liberty in the open firmament of heaven? How amazing the variety of them! What beauty in them! What a wonderful uniformity in the individuals of the ſeveral kinds! What a wonderfnl gradation,

tion, from the leſs, to the more, perfect and nobler kinds, till it endeth in man, who is conſtituted the Lord of all! How curious and wonderful the contrivance of their inſtincts, of their connexions and relations to one another, and of the ſubſerviency of the inferior to the higher! Theſe things have been much celebrated by all who have been attentive to the works of nature, and they are much celebrated in the Holy Scriptures, as declaring the glory of God; and repreſented, in a poetical manner, as all joining in his praiſe. All theſe admired works ſhall be deſtroyed, not one of them left. Their admired beauty and greatneſs, their variety, their uſefulneſs, their ſubordination to one another, the admirable order which by inſtinct is preſerved among them, ſhall be no more. All ſhall be loſt in one general confuſion and ruin.

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So ſhall alſo all the works of human art, and induſtry, and labour. Thoſe monuments of greatneſs and power which ſeem to have been contrived to laſt as long as the world, and which have been the wonder of ages, how any power of man could effect them, ſhall all periſh. All the great cities of the world, with all their magnificent and proud ornaments, ſhall fall into univerſal ruin, and not ſo much as the place of them be any more known; all the curious collections,

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which the learned in knowledge of nature have made, for ever loſt. All the productions of learning and knowledge, all the volumes which contain them, at once deſtroyed; what have from the firſt appearance of them, been the delight of all ages, and which aſſuredly will be ſo to the end of time, loſt for ever? No diſtinction; the moſt valuable productions of human genius and art, with the leaſt ſignificant, go together. Thus all the works of nature, all the productions of human art and power, and all which is accounted excellent and beautiful externally, ſhall find in the ruins of nature their grave, from which they ſhall never ariſe. This is a very plain and ſhort account of that great event as it is predicted in the Holy Scriptures: And it is a moving thing to think of it. Such a grand and magnificent, ſuch a beautiful and curious wrok as this world, turned into one great heap of ruins. Imagine yourſelves ſpectators of this event; and of the end and deſtruction of that great theatre upon which we have acted our own little part, and what a crowd of thoughts muſt preſs into the mind, ſome of the moſt uſeful of which, I ſhall now point out to you. And firſt of all,

While our imaginations preſent to us this great and amazing event, faith at the ſame time calls up our attention to the Supreme

Being as directing the final diſſolution, as he did the firſt formation of nature. It was by him foreſeen, it was by him intended; it is therefore right; and the mind beholding him preſent, and executing this great work, reſteth with a pleaſing acquieſcence in it, as wiſe and worthy of himſelf. For aſſuredly, he who made the world, beſt knoweth how to diſpoſe of it, and can never diſpoſe of it but in a manner which is wiſe and worthy of himſelf. But how aweful will the power of God then appear! He is often terrible in his appearances to the children of men, in the particular diſpenſations of his Providence; in ſtorms and tempeſts, in inundations and earthquakes; but never hath he appeared in a manner ſo aweful, as he will in the diſſolution of all nature; which we ſee, from the ſcriptural account, will be attended with peculiar circumſtances of terrible majeſty. Still theſe are the terrors of God; a Being who is perfectly good as well as wiſe; ſo that his faithful ſervants have nothing to apprehend from them. A ſenſe of his favour, and faith in him, aſſureth the believing mind of perfect ſafety; and that very power which ſhall be ſo amazingly diſplayed, is the certain pledge of it. Well then may the accepted ſubjects of God's kingdom ſtand as ſafe and quiet, nay, joyful ſpectators of that SERM. XVI.

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event, adoring that Being who gave the command for the creation of a world, and now giveth the command for the diſſolution of it. He is the ſame, and is carrying on, in all poſſible events, the ſame great deſign; of which deſign we are to judge, not from any particular formidable events, but what we moſt aſſuredly know concerning the infinite greatneſs and goodneſs, and the immutability of the Divine mind. *God is the dwelling place of his people in all generations.* The world may be loſt to them; their God is the ſame to them; and *his name* ſtill *the Tower to which they flee and are ſafe.* This ſeemeth to have been in the Pſalmiſt's eye in the Paſſage of the 102 Pſalm which I have read to you. *They ſhall periſh, but thou ſhalt endure: yea all of them ſhall wax old like a garment, as a veſture ſhalt thou change them, and they ſhall be changed; but thou art the ſame and thy years ſhall have no end. The children of thy ſervants ſhall continue, and their ſeed ſhall be eſtabliſhed before thee.* Glorious view of the ſtate of the righteous, which can never be ſhaken, and which in the apparent ruins of nature, and in all poſſible revolutions, will be ſtill the ſame!

Secondly, It cannot but occur to our thoughts, in looking forward to this great event, that then all good and evil, which

is

is external to us, and of the temporal kind, will be as if it had never been, as if it had no existence; like *a dream* indeed *when one awaketh*, which is no more. External things, such are station, power, and authority; such are possessions and the pleasure they yield, and health itself to enjoy them; these things are good and desireable; nature directeth every man to seek after them; and they may be improved to excellent purposes; but they are not for ever. They are intended for the service and comfort of our present state, but they do not attend us at our removal from it; indeed are, as if they never existed. The splendor of crowned heads, their courts, their armies, their palaces, their conquests, and acquisitions, are no more for ever. The outward distinctions of the great and the noble are lost. Their power over others, their precedence, their attendants, their table, and all things of that sort are gone. Waalth is no more. No more is beauty or strength, no more the decorations of the body, nor any thing of that kind. At the conclusion of the scene these things will be as if they never had existed. This is a matter, to the truth of which, believer and infidel in other respects, must equally assent. However many, who will not attend to it, yet to all it is certain. Those who are of this world, who

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have their portion under the ſun, and never purſued any thing higher, ſo that when this world is loſt to them their all is gone, yet can have no doubt of the truth of what I am now ſaying; and know well that the ſcene which is ſo pleaſing to them will not laſt for ever; laſt indeed only for a little time. Some of them perhaps are fenced againſt the alarm, which this muſt otherwiſe unavoidably give them, by a perſuaſion that they themſelves ſhall have no exiſtence in any ſtate beyond the preſent, and take ſanctuary, from fear, in the hope, the poor miſerable hope, of annihilation; but ſhould this prove a miſtake, as we have very good reaſon to believe it will, how miſerable muſt their ſtate be! And indeed we ſhall unavoidably become moderate in our eſteem of things temporal, when we attend to it, that in a little time theſe things will be as if they never had exiſted; light therefore, in truth, as vanity. The ſame may be, on the other ſide, applied to the evils and ſufferings of life, I mean all which are external and temporal; ſuch as ſickneſs, pain, and the whole train of diſtreſſes to which mortal and animal life is liable; at the concluſion of the ſcene to all, at the concluſion of it to every individual, they will be, as if they had never been. Remembrance of them there will and muſt be, by which men will be affected according

according to their moral ſtate, but the objects themſelves of pleaſure and pain, of delight and miſery, are no more for ever. SERM. XV.

But, in the third place, What then remains, and which cannot be hurt or affected by the ruins and convulſions of nature? The immortal ſpirit remains; the moral ſtate remains, and the character, as that is taken from the ſum of all the moral actions of paſt life, which muſt therefore, with regard to the paſt, be fixed and unalterable, as theſe actions cannot be recalled, and muſt be eternally what they have been. This is the graveſt and moſt affecting of all conſiderations; aweful, yet at the ſame time moſt pleaſing thought. This world, the great theatre, upon which mankind are placed, is made of ſuch materials as may be diſſolved, fall into ruins, and return to that prodigious chaos out of which it was formed. But the ſpirit which God hath placed in every man, a ſimple undivided principle of ſenſation and action, is not in it's nature liable to any ſuch change, any ſuch ruin; but it would ſeem, muſt ſubſiſt and continue what it is, unleſs by the Almighty power of the Creator it ſhould be annihilated. Many have ſet this argumnet in a light ſo ſtrong, that, in reality, it ſeemeth to admit of no ſubſtantial anſwer. Come, then of matter, and of the worlds which are compoſ-

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ed of it, what will, this can have no relation to, or effect upon, the ſubſiſtence or duration of what is not material, what in its nature ſpeaketh immortality. The flames which are to reduce the world to a formleſs maſs cannot hurt it. It ſubſiſteth, it's powers likewiſe, it's conſciouſneſs and moral character ſubſiſt. This above all things demandeth our attention. The moral character is an unalterable thing, as it is taken from the ſum of all our paſt actions, and the principles of them. If we have been righteous, it will be for ever true that we have been ſo; if we have acted an unrighteous and bad part, it will be for ever true that we have done ſo. If we have unfeignedly repented and turned from all ſin to God, it will be for ever true that we have done ſo; and if we have been ſincere believers in Chriſt, it will be for ever true that we have been ſo; the general ſtate of the ſoul, as it is the reſult of thoſe things that are paſt, can no more be alterable than truth itſelf; as little can conſciouſneſs, while conſciouſneſs remains, admit of any change.

Thus, when at the conſummation of all things, nature is laid in ruins, the ſtate of the immortal ſpirit is juſt what it was, and admitteth of no change; I ſpeak now of its ſtate as the reſult of paſt actions. Here the mind cannot but enlarge itſelf, in contemplating

plating the oppoſite characters of the good and of the bad. Think of perſons, who, at the deſtruction of the preſent ſtate of things, and of this world, (and indeed the caſe is the ſame with reſpect to individuals when they are removed out of it) have loſt their all; their pleaſures and poſſeſſions are all gone for ever, and every thing for which they had any reliſh: The remembrance of them muſt remain, but muſt be painful, as the objects themſelves are no more, and all delight in them for ever cut off. This is a ſtate of penury and want indeed. Again, the painful conſciouſneſs of paſt bad actions, and of a criminal conduct remain, and muſt for ever remain, inſeparable from the ſinners mind, as the ſhadow is from the ſubſtance: And how painful that conſciouſneſs, and the ſelf-loathing and abhorrence which attendeth it may be, who can tell? Or who can ſet any limit to the degree of it? This is a moſt awakening conſideration, and, I humbly think, much more, than any thing which can come from without, alarmeth the mind. SERM. XV.

Again, as the moral ſtate and character is quite unalterable, ſo muſt the Divine mind be diſpoſed and affected towards it. The character muſt for ever appear in the Divine eye what it really is; and according to what it really is, muſt the Supreme mind

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Sect. XV. be affected with complacency in it, or diſlike of and averſion againſt it; for in the rules and meaſures of his adminiſtration, there cannot poſſibly be any alteration: And what the fruits and effects of the Divine anger may be, who can ſay? Thus the caſe, then, upon the whole matter, is, the bad and unrighteous man remaineth, when this world is for ever loſt to him, ſeparated from all that ever was the object of his pleaſure and delight; attended, as with a ſhadow, with a conſciouſneſs which muſt be the ſource of moſt grievous pain; in truth the moſt grievous of which we can have any idea; and a laſting object of his Maker's diſpleaſure. To periſh with the univerſal frame of nature, would be in this caſe, ſo to ſpeak, great happineſs; but that is not to be admitted, and can never be hoped for.

On the other hand, the righteous man leaves this world, and will be a witneſs to the great cataſtrophe of nature, without any cauſe of being diſmayed. He is cut off indeed from the paſt pleaſures of animal and mortal life; but he can ſubſiſt and be happy without them. While he was converſant upon this theatre, he could enjoy them; but knew in himſelf better things, and objects of higher delight, in his love of moral excellency, the greateſt of all which can be called beauty; in the exerciſe of

of good affections, in the doing of good actions, in a conſciouſneſs of doing them, and in a ſenſe of his Maker's favour: And, now that the world is no more to him, theſe nobler joys remain with him, and no revolution whatſoever in nature can deprive him of them. He has a ſenſe and conſciouſneſs of moral excellency, which yieldeth the moſt ſubſtantial of all pleaſure and joy, which can ariſe from a created object. He hath a taſte and reliſh for all that is excellent without him, eſpecially for the Supreme and perfect excellency; in the viſion of whom there is fulneſs of joy. He hath a ſenſe of the favour and approbation of this Being, which is above all other things to be deſired; and will ſhare with all the members of God's family in thoſe emanations of his love, which crown the bliſs of his ſervants. He is capable of all that ſatisfaction which ariſeth from the contemplation of the works of God; in which there muſt be an entertainment, various, high, and which can never pall the deſire. Thus furniſhed, what is the diſſolution of the world and the deſtruction of the works of it, to him? Eſpecially, when he knows that this is part of the original moſt worthy deſign; and that the ruins of the former, muſt be the introduction of ſome other ſcene, which ſhall be ſtill worthy of Supreme wiſdom and goodneſs. SERM. XV.

neſs. The mind does with high delight en-
XV. gage in ſuch ſpeculations as theſe, and they are in truth ſome of the richeſt entertainments of our preſent ſtate. We cannot tell when the end and diſſolution of nature ſhall come; we cannot tell what the immediate cauſes of it ſhall be, the circumſtances, with which it is to be attended, ſtrike the mind with great awe. But what we are ſure of is, that the diſſolution of nature is not an accidental thing; that it is the Parent of the world which commandeth it; that the command for it will not be given, till the great ends and purpoſes, for which it was made, are fully anſwered; and that nothing which can come to paſs in nature, or to it, can affect the moral character, and ſtate; or in the leaſt hurt thoſe intereſts of the ſervants of God, which alone are valuable. The conſummation of all things then, and the end of this world is never to be conſidered as an object of horror and averſion, but on the contrary of pleaſing expectation; as we have the beſt reaſon to believe that the ſucceeding ſcenes will be much nobler and more deſireable. I ſay, ſucceeding ſcenes, for as we believe aſſuredly that the human ſoul is immortal, and formed for an eternal duration, ſo that it cannot be loſt in the general ruins of nature; we likewiſe have plain enough indications,

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that the matter or ſubſtance, out of which the frame of nature is made, ſhall neither be be annihilated, nor loſt to the creation of God; *for we, according to his promiſe, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteouſneſs ſhall dwell*, 2 Pet. iii. 13. SERM. XV.

Fourthly, When in our imaginations we take a view of this great cataſtrophe of nature, the attentive cannot but ſee, that this frame of things, which ſhall then be diſſolved, was intended only to miniſter to the great ends and purpoſes of a moral creation in it; and that therefore it muſt be far leſs excellent than that creation. So houſes are built for the ſake and upon the account of thoſe who ſhall inhabit them; and temples on account of the worſhip to be performed in them; and theatres upon account of thoſe public ſhews which are to be exhibited in them; and were it not to ſerve ſuch purpoſes, ſuch buildings would never have been thought of. This, with reſpect to this vaſt theatre, or frame of nature which ſhall be diſſolved, the fact is, that it ſerveth for the preſent purpoſes of a moral creation upon it; where innumerable moral agents are in ſucceſſive generations to act their part. But when this theatre is deſtroyed, theſe moral agents will remain juſt what they were, with reſpect to their immortal ſubſtance and powers, and clothed with

Serm. XV. with moral characters ſuitable to the parts they have acted. Now when we ſee that material nature ſhall periſh, but they remain, it is naturally ſuggeſted to the mind, that the former was originally intended, and framed, principally to miniſter to the purpoſes of ſuch a moral creation: And that this creation is therefore of much more account, and more excellent, than that which was intended and made to ſerve the various purpoſes of it, and which but for the view of ſerving thoſe or ſimilar purpoſes, would have had no exiſtence. When we look into the conſtitution of our world, and the various parts of it, and the gradation of beings in it, we ſee, that as human nature is the moſt excellent thing in it, ſo to the human kind all things were made to ſerve, either mediately or immediately; all the productions of the vegetable world, all the orders of animals, the beaſts of the earth, the birds of the air, and the fiſhes of the ſea; and as the uſefulneſs of moſt of theſe is obvious, ſo we rationally conclude, that other things which do not appear to be uſeful, ſeeming rather to be a nuſance in the world, yet are really ſerviceable, though the particular uſes for which they were intended we cannot aſſign. From this ſtate of things we conclude, that man is the moſt excellent being in this lower creation, as to him all things

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in it miniſter. But this appeareth in a much ſtronger light when we imagine the time when all theſe things ſhall be deſtroyed, yet the human ſpecies remaineth; and is to enter into a new ſcene. Now, wherein doth the great excellency of the human kind conſiſt? Not ſurely in natural powers and abilities; for with a large portion of theſe, man may be a vile and moſt hateful creature. It conſiſteth in moral rectitude, in a good heart, and a right ſtate of the affections; this maketh man excellent, this maketh him happy, this maketh him the image of God, and capable of happineſs, which may indeed be ſaid to be divine. It is plain then, that moral rectitude was that to which this whole creation was intended to miniſter, and that without ſuch a deſign it would have had no being. This is a very affecting and obvious demonſtration of the excellency of holineſs or moral rectitude in the Creator's eye, and ſheweth of what eſtimation it ought to be with us. It may be truly ſaid to be that, without which this whole creation would be a mere blank, and anſwer no valuable deſign. How happy were it for us if this were ſufficiently impreſſed upon our minds? Happy is the man who under a thorough conviction of it purſueth after moral excellency through the whole of life, and accounteth all things elſe,

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Serm. XV. as indeed they are, *loſs and dung*, when compared to it. This we are taught, by the religion of Chriſt, to conſider as the diſtinguiſhing mark of his diſciples; it is eſſential to their character; and by it they are ſeparated from the men of this world, who have their portion upon earth. Theſe, negligent of that which in the creation is moſt excellent, that which is the glory of human nature, and the ſource of its higheſt happineſs, follow after ſublunary and temporal things, which periſh in the uſing, and which, but only for ſuch uſefulneſs, would have had no exiſtence. If they attain to that meaſure of ſuch things they aim at, they want nothing more, nothing higher. This is miſerable perverſion of human nature, and making that our end, which was deſigned only as a temporary means of ſerving our end. But muſt we wait for a conviction of this till we ſee all things temporal fall into ruins? Wait for a conviction of it, till a conviction of it will be of no uſe? Do not we ſee it now? Do we not ſee it from the nature of the things which are ſeen and are temporal? Do we not ſee it from the frame of our own minds, from the moral powers and capacities of them? And that ſenſe of moral excellency which the Creator of all hath planted in every man? And if we do ſee it, may we be accordingly affected,

affected, and employ life in purſuing after, and acquiring that which will make us ſafe, make us rich, make us happy, when all nature around us ſhall be diſſolved, and not a ſingle monument of external greatneſs or fee; power be left. This we *ſhall* certainly let us be affected by it as if we now ſaw it, or as if we knew that the event were at hand; and let our mind riſe to a ſtate and manner of thinking, ſome way ſuitable to the dignity of it's original, and ſubdue in us the ſpirit of this world, and all the luſts of it. We have, and muſt have, relation to this world as our habitation for a while; but yet we *are ſtrangers and ſojourners in it, as all our fathers were.* With a ſpirit ſuitable to that character, let us go through it, towards our everlaſting abode, *the city* which God hath prepared for his ſervants. SERM. XV.

Laſtly, When we look forward to the diſſolution of nature, when it ſhall have fully anſwered the Creator's intention, as a great theatre, upon which multitudes of moral agents were to act, as a preparation for another ſtate of exiſtence; this leads us to look upon this world, and the preſent ſtate of things, not as in itſelf a compleat and perfect whole; but only as part of a deſign, framed for a particular purpoſe, bearing a relation to other parts of the great deſign, and therefore

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adapted to them. This view of things will furniſh ſubſtantial anſwers to many objections, which may be offered againſt the preſent ſtate, and the Divine adminiſtration in it. The great deſign of this whole univerſe, taken together, as conſiſting of a very great variety of parts adapted to one another, I ſay, the great deſign is, no doubt, perfect and worthy of the infinite wiſdom and goodneſs of the glorious Creator; ſo, no doubt, is every part of it, conſidered as a part, and adapted to the great whole. But when a part is conſidered by itſelf, and without relation to that whole, it may appear a very imperfect and unfiniſhed thing. And thus with reſpect to this world, there may be many things in it which, conſidered abſtractedly, and by themſelves, may appear imperfections, which yet conſidered as bearing a relation to, and being connected with other things, are perfectly right. And in this light we are ever to conſider this world and the preſent ſtate of things.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

Communion with God explained in a ſenſe not liable to the charge of Enthuſiaſm.

1 JOHN I. 6.

If we ſay we have fellowſhip with him, and walk in darkneſs, we lie, and do not the truth.

THE main ſubjects of the author's diſcourſe on this Epiſtle, are the love of God and charity, ſondneſs of faith, and holineſs of life; upon which he ſuggeſts many things that are of great weight in practical religion, and gives a true account of the Chriſtian ſpirit. In the verſe before my text, he tells us, *that God is light, and in him is no darkneſs.* There are but two abſtracted epithets in the whole ſcripture, by which God is deſcribed to us, and they are

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both in this Epiſtle; both very glorious, God is *light*, and God is *love*. A way of ſpeaking which very agreeably ſtrikes the imagination, and tends to give us the juſteſt ſentiments concerning the Divine nature and perfections. *God is light, and in him is no darkneſs.* No one will be at a loſs to know, that light and darkneſs here, according to a way of ſpeaking much uſed in the Holy Scriptures, are to be taken in a figurative ſenſe, and denote a moral character. So the meaning is, that God is perfectly holy and good, and that in him there is no moral imperfection, nothing evil. From this, by way of inference, the author teacheth us in my text, that *if we ſay we have fellowſhip with God, and walk in darkneſs* (in the crooked and perverſe ways of unrighteouſneſs, which ſhun the light) *we lie, and do not the truth.* For there can indeed be *no communion between light and darkneſs*, between God and Belial: To ſpeak of fellowſhip with God when the heart is naughty, and the life wicked, is utterly abſurd. This will fully appear, when I have explained communion with God, which is my principal deſign in this diſcourſe; and which I would do the more particularly, that I imagine, it is a ſubject which has been much miſtaken, and many things ſaid about it, that are perfectly enthuſiaſtic. Commu-

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tion or fellowſhip in general, ſignifies no SERM.
more than our having any thing common to XVI.
us, with others, in ſtate, relation, or enjoyment. Thus we have fellowſhip with all mankind in the eſſential properties of human nature, which are common to all. We have fellowſhip with angels, in the powers and faculties of mind. And with the lower orders of creatures in the powers of animal life. Men have alſo fellowſhip one with another in the relations which ariſe from their being born in the ſame country, ſprung from the ſame family, placed in the ſame circumſtances, engaged in the ſame buſineſs, intitled to the ſame privileges and immunities, ſitting at the ſame table, and the like. But very often this phraſe is uſed in a ſtill larger ſenſe, to expreſs any kind of commerce and intercourſe men have with one another, in the giving and receiving favours, in the buſineſs of life, in converſation, and every thing of that ſort. And this is all that I ſhall ſay concerning fellowſhip or communion in general.

It greatly raiſes our thoughts of the ſtate of true chriſtians, that *their fellowſhip* is ſaid to be *with the father and with his ſon Jeſus Chriſt*. 1 John i. 3. Let us conſider in what this communion, which is our honour and happineſs, really conſiſts. And when we have

SERM. XVI. ſtript it of every thing enthuſiaſtic and vain, we ſhall find in it pleaſing encouragement, and moſt agreeable entertainment of the thoughts.

The Apoſtle *Peter* directs us to the principal branch of our fellowſhip with the Father, when he tells us, that chriſtians *are partakers of a divine nature:* As you ſee 2 Pet. i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promiſes, that by theſe we might be partakers of the,* or rather *of a, divine nature, having eſcaped the corruption that is in the world through luſt.* No one will be in danger of falling into an abſurdity ſo groſs, as to imagine that the divine nature or perfections can be communicated to any mortal, or indeed, to any creature. This is impoſſible: And the only intelligible ſenſe in which this expreſſion can be taken, is, that men while they become truly virtuous and good, and have worthy and pure affections ruling in them, poſſeſs ſo far a divine nature; that is, a temper that is like God, and is really his image upon them. Perfect purity and infinite goodneſs are what conſtitute the divine character. Theſe are the moſt illuſtrious glories of divinity: And when men are pure in heart, and have undiſſembled worth and goodneſs in them, they have a divine nature in them, thoſe qualities and perfections, in an inferior and low degree, which

which conſtitute the nature of God, and his Sect. XVI.
glory. Agreeably to this, men of virtue and integrity are ſaid to be the *children of God, to be born from above, to be created again after the divine image. God, and the ſpirit of God, are ſaid to be in them, and to dwell in them.* And as we can form very clear and diſtinct ideas of purity and goodneſs in God, ſo we are required to ſet theſe before us as the pattern of our imitation; and are endowed with the powers of moral agency which make us capable of this imitation: and though the moſt perfect muſt come infinitely ſhort of the glorious ſtandard, yet they may have real goodneſs in them, and qualities, the ſame in kind with divine perfection.

In conſequence of this, there muſt be a fellowſhip with God in the ends of life and of action. The end he propoſes, we may, without being too bold, affirm to be the doing good; that is, communicating happineſs, and promoting moral perfection. And, in this ſenſe, in the whole of his adminiſtration, he does the greateſt poſſible good. Men of true worth and virtue, in their ſphere, purſue the ſame end; and are, by the principle which reigns within them, determined to a moſt ſteady and chearful concurrence with the deſigns of the grace of God, and the meaſures of his adminiſtration. 'Tis indeed true, that we have

Serm. XVI. a principle planted in us which aims at our own happineſs, and that operates with great ſtrength and energy: A principle abſolutely neceſſary in creatures, who are imperfect and dependent, and whoſe felicity muſt in ſome meaſure reſult from external and foreign objects; and who are placed in a ſtate in which they are to attain to this happineſs, as the fruit of their own diligence in moral improvement. There can be nothing like this in a being originally and neceſſarily perfect and happy: A being, who is all-ſufficient, and knows no dependece, for the continuance or the fruition of exiſtence. But as we have a principle of regard to our own intereſt planted in us, of which our happineſs is the ultimate end, ſo we have principles and affections, of which the happineſs of others is the ultimate end. And true moral worth will determine men to do all the good they can in the creation of God, and to his family. In this they have fellowſhip with God, they purſue the ſame end in action, and go into all thoſe meaſures they are capable of, by which it may be promoted. This is ſo much inſiſted on in the New Teſtament, that it appears to be the very eſſence of Chriſt's religion: Men who have not *charity*, are repreſented as having *nothing* in them. Without this, all other advantages are utterly inſignificant, and with them all,

all, without *Charity*, men are as *ſounding braſs*, GRAM. or *tinkling cymbals*. *He that loveth not, know-* XVI. *eth not God*, has no communion with him, *for God is love*. 1 John iv. 8.

Let us go ſtill a ſtep farther. If we have fellowſhip with God in the principles and ends of life, we muſt have fellowſhip with him in felicity. As far as we can conceive of the divine bliſs, it muſt be ſuppoſed to reſult from his own perfections, eſpecially from his moral attributes, or, which is the ſame thing, from being and from doing good. We can frame no idea to ourſelves of divine fruition, in which this does not make the principal part. Now, have we not a ſemblance of this, a very faint one indeed, in the ſtate of men of true worth, and in the entertainment of their minds? *Solomon* tells us, *Prov.* xiv. 14. that as *the backſlider in his heart ſhall be filled with his own way*, ſo *a good man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf*. And our Saviour tells us, *John* iv. 14. that *whoſo ſhall drink of the water* that he gives, *it ſhall be in him a well of water ſpringing up into eternal life*. And again vii. 38. That *whoſoever believes on him, out of his belly ſhould flow rivers of living water*. All theſe expreſſions plainly ſignify this, that the great entertainment of a good mind ſprings up in itſelf, from it's own affections and actions. And we are ſure that the pleaſure and happineſs

Sect. XVI. happiness which does thus arise from the inward spring, are the fruits of goodness principally. This gives the most sincere felicity: And is not this like the divine felicity, as the principle from which it flows is a resemblance of the divine perfection? This is, in truth, the noblest light in which human nature can possibly be set, and gives the most engaging representation of it. How much are we obliged to the Creator of all, for those powers and faculties by which we are capable of communion with him! And how inexcuseable and horrid is it, so to abuse them, that instead of being springs of the highest and most sincere bliss, they shall become the fountains of utter woe and misery! I hope no one will think that the account I have given exaggerates things, and raises our thoughts of human nature too high: For I have said nothing but what the holy scriptures, and indeed the principles of reason, warrant. And I am sure it is a pleasing, and may be a very profitable entertainment to our minds, to contemplate our nature in its highest capacities and improvements; and to think seriously what an invaluable treasure is in our possession, and what an honourable station is assigned us in the scale of being. Happy the man whose care it is to preserve the sacred dignity of his nature from profanation; and labours with diligence to advance

advance himſelf to the honour, and bliſs, for SERM.
which he was originally intended. XVI.

In the ſecond place, We have fellowſhip with God as the object of our truſt and dependence. We are conſcious to ourſelves that we *came* into being, without any agency of ours, and therefore by the power and will of another. We find we are needy creatures, dependent upon external cauſes and objects for the ſubſiſtence of life. We have vaſt proſpects before us, and great reaſon to believe that we ſhall exiſt after death, in a ſtate, to which we are at preſent in a great meaſure ſtrangers. How natural is it for the mind, in this ſenſe and view of its ſtate, to ſeek after an object of truſt, which ſhall be a firm reſt and ſtay to it, and render it eaſy and ſatisfied! In the whole compaſs of created being no ſuch thing is to be found; for all is precarious and uncertain, eſpecially thoſe things with which we are moſt familiarly acquainted, ſuch as friends and poſſeſſions upon earth. But when we aſcend, above all thoſe things, to the firſt cauſe, and ſupreme arbiter; when we reaſon ourſelves into a firm perſuaſion of his being and providence, and that he is perfectly wiſe and perfectly good; that he will regard moral agents in a manner ſuitable to their nature, and the powers with which he has endowed them; that he will juſtly and graciouſly

SERM. XVI. graciously accept of and reward the good, while he inflicts deserved punishment upon the bad: Here alone we find rest to our souls. We are fully persuaded that, under the government of such a Being, it shall be well with the righteous. The holy scriptures do greatly aid us in our inquiries of this sort; and teach us, that the good and worthy shall be eternally the objects of divine favour; that their sins, sincerely repented of, shall be all forgiven them; that a high happiness is provided for them: And of all this the only begotten of the Father, the son of his love, *given to the death for us*, is the pledge. There are some expressions used in scripture, which wonderfully strike the imagination, and open and raise the heart. *God himself is said to be the portion of his people.* He is said *to be their inheritance. And if children, then are they heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.* Rom. viii. 17. Heirs of God, meaning that they inherit God, that he himself is their inheritance. And he is represented as *their father in Christ*, in a peculiar sense. *Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my father, and your father, to my God, and your God.* John xx. 17.

Now such a relation to God, the original cause and supreme arbiter of all things, leads our thoughts to a very important branch of our

our fellowship with him. The power of God is engaged in our defence; the wisdom of God is our guide; the bounty of God is our inheritance; and according to the expression of the Apostle *Paul*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. *All things are ours, we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* The relation is mutual, and so, through our Lord Jesus Christ, God is ours: That is, his power is ours for our support and defence; his wisdom ours to direct our way; his goodness to appoint all our lot, in the most agreeable and expedient manner. We are mighty in his strength, wise in his wisdom, rich in his bounty, and by the property he has in all things. His perfections then are ours, so far as the exercise of them is necessary for our subsistence and happiness. That purpose will be more effectually served by omnipotence in the hand of God, than if it were in our own. We know not what shall come to pass to us in the stages of near and distant futurity; but God knows, and that is enough for us. Our minds are narrow, and entangled with prejudice; and our judgments weak and insufficient for directing our way; but God's knowledge is infallible, and it ought fully to satisfy us, *that if we acknowledge him in all our ways, he will direct our paths.* Whatever the circumstances of men of worth in this world may be, however poor, and depressed, and unfortunate,

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Serm. XVI. unfortunate, yet they are the children and heirs of him that poſſeſſeth all things. What is really *good the Lord will give*: And what is not good ought never to be the object of our wiſh. A more pleaſing and eaſy ſtate of the mind cannot be imagined, than when it is prepared by true worth to lay hold on the promiſes and covenant of God, and can ſee the Supreme Ruler of the univerſe, and the high and unchangeable perfections of his nature, engaged, I may ſay pledged, for our ſubſiſtence and our felicity. When the believing mind can appropriate every thing in God, and in the meaſures of his adminiſtration, as the object of truſt and joyful confidence; how muſt it exult in the divine greatneſs and grace, in his power, and the majeſty of his ſtate! What a pleaſing fruition muſt it have of theſe things, the foundation, the ſure foundation of the ſtrongeſt private confidence, and hope! While the good affections will prepare it, at the ſame time, to rejoice in behalf of the whole univerſe, and all the creatures in it; all under the care and ſuperintendency of this Being, who will, by the meaſures of his infallible wiſdom, at laſt conduct all things to the moſt deſirable iſſue. Nothing more is to be wiſhed: And in the exerciſe of ſuch faith in God, thoſe pleaſing ſenſations muſt neceſſarily ſpring up in the mind, to which

which the name of fellowſhip and communion with him may be very properly, and often have been given. Nor can the mind ever account itſelf unhappy, while it preſerves a temper capable of ſuch confidence towards God, and of applying his gracious promiſes. SERM. XVI.

But it was obſerved in the beginning of this diſcourſe, that fellowſhip is often taken in a larger ſenſe, to ſignify any intercourſe we have with one another, in the affairs and commerce of life; in giving or receiving favours, or even in converſation together: So fellowſhip with God may be underſtood to expreſs the intercourſe we have with heaven, in receiving continual favours, and in returns of gratitude and ſincere obedience. All men receive daily innumerable favours from God, the common favours of life; but it cannot be ſaid that all men have fellowſhip with him: This points to intercourſe of another kind, and which is peculiar to men of real worth.

Methinks the chief thing to be taken notice of here, is the endeavours of mutual affection: If men ſincerely love God, they muſt know that God loves them; that is, when they are conſcious to themſelves and ſatisfied of their own ſincerity: For nothing is more certain, than that if our hearts be ſacred to God, we have a place in his: And while the

mind,

Serm. XVI. mind, in tendencies of holy affection, addreſſes itſelf to God, there will be a pleaſing ſenſe of his love to us, a love that is unchangeable and eternal. This muſt be a moſt joyful ſtate of the mind; and the thoughts can never turn to God, with ſuch a ſenſe of things, without delight of the higheſt and moſt ſatisfying kind. There is in the human heart a ſtrong appetite and deſire after eſteem and love from others; a deſire that is ſeen to obtain moſt in the moſt generous and worthy ſpirits; and it is an affection which may ſerve very important purpoſes in human life. Now, this generous affection is gratified to the very utmoſt, in a ſenſe that we are beloved of God; and when the mind, in this conſciouſneſs, addreſſes itſelf to him in the exerciſe of love and gratitude, this cannot fail of yielding the higheſt happineſs which human nature can know. And as we have conſtant evidences of the Divine preſence with us, and ſee his hand every day, every minute, in every thing about us, and which concerns us, here is proviſion made for a continual entertainment!

Farther, as a ſenſe of the favour of God attending a conſciouſneſs of integrity, makes the particular gifts we receive from his bounty appear in a light moſt pleaſing and comfortable, and gives a moſt particular reliſh in

the enjoyment of them: When our food and raiment, our health and prosperity, our friends, and all other conveniences and comforts of life, are considered as coming from the hand of a God who loves us, who intends and will take pleasure in making us happy; who certainly therefore will give us every thing that is really good for us; constantly regarding us with a parental eye, and training us up, in the discipline of this life, to a fitness for an inheritance most rich and glorious in the upper world; the mind in this contemplation must feel the pleasing emotions of love, joy, and gratitude; and will utter them in the high praises of God, with unspeakable delight. Thus, an intercourse is maintained with heaven, to which bad men, and those who forget God, are utter strangers; and it is an intercourse the most natural that can be imagined. The providence of God, every hour of our lives, taking care of and conferring favours upon us, courts us to observe its sacred hand; and our doing this with proper affections of mind, is so far from being superstitious, or favouring of an enthusiastic turn, that it is certainly the most material thing imaginable, and what good sense must direct us to, if we really believe a Providence, and are convinced that the holy

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Serm. XVI. presence is every where, and administers all our affairs.

But as men of worth and piety receive external favours in common with the rest of mankind, so that we have reason to believe that they are, in a peculiar manner, the objects of Divine care, as they are the only objects of Divine favour: And we certainly know that all the gifts of grace, and all the assistances that are needful to guide, and support, and encourage them, in their virtuous course, shall be conferred on them. For all these things they are to ask, and they have the Divine promise that they shall obtain; and in the several acts of obedience and duty, of love and gratitude, in which they express their sense of Divine favours, and make such returns as they are capable of, they maintain their fellowship with God.

I have only to add on this head, that there are certain exercises of the mind, and religious duties, in which this happy state of the mind is more particularly expressed: Such are devout meditation, prayer and praise, and conversing with God in all the offices of piety. When men have real worth and pious dispositions, they will apply themselves to these exercises with care and delightful expectation; endeavouring by them to strengthen their

their good affections, and virtuous habits, Serm. and to encreaſe their ſacred joys; and the XVI. more they thus apply themſelves the more of this kind, they are ſtill like to obtain; *For to him that hath ſhall be given*, to him who improveth what he hath ſhall be given, *and he ſhall have more abundantly, but from him that hath not, ſhall be taken even that which he* ſeemeth to have. *Matt.* xiii. 12.

What has been ſaid upon this argument will help us to a good commentary upon ſome expreſſions of our Saviour, in which the ſubject is ſet in a very ſtrong and affecting light. John, xiv. 21. *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me ſhall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifeſt myſelf to him. Judas ſaith unto him (not Iſcariot) Lord how is it that thou wilt manifeſt thyſelf to us, and not unto the world? Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto him, if a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* It is certain that the Holy Scriptures were not intended to teach us the exact philoſophy, the particular cauſes of things, their relations and connections in nature; but only to give us thoſe views, and that ſenſe of them which might be neceſſary to direct our conduct, and thereby to ſerve the

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purpoſes of religion. What the particular agency of the Divine power may be upon the human mind, we know not: Nor have we any certain rule, as far as I know, by which we may judge that any particular thoughts or deſires ariſing in the mind, are owing to that agency, as the immediate cauſe.

In general we are taught to aſcribe every thing done for us, to God, as the original and firſt cauſe. But as it is very abſurd to exclude the Deity, *in whom we live and have our being*, from all direct and immediate agency upon the heart of man; ſo we ſeem to be utterly at a loſs in accounting for the manner and methods of it, and in aſcribing particular appearances and effects to that, as the immediate cauſe. With reſpect to the preſent argument, we know that in fellowſhip with God, as it has been deſcribed to you, there muſt be (if the natural influence is not obſtructed by infirmity of mind) moſt pleaſing ſenſations of the heart; a ſolid and ſincere joy, which muſt ſpring from a ſenſe of the preſence and favour of God. So when our Saviour ſays, *If a man loves me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him*; the meaning may be, that in this ſtate of mind men ſhall have ſuch ſenſations of joy and

and bliſs, ſo much of God and of happineſs SERM. in their hearts, and this habitually, (to what- XVI. ever immediate cauſes it may be owing) that ſuch men may be properly ſaid to have God dwelling in them: This, I ſay, may be the meaning, for undoubtedly it was our Saviour's principal deſign to ſhew men what they might expect to feel and enjoy, and not the immediate cauſes of this; to deſcribe the ſenſations of the heart, and not the particular ſprings of them. And when men have theſe ſenſations of ſincere joy and bliſs in confidence towards God, and in the belief of his preſence with them, this may be very properly called the in-dwelling of divinity: Thus good men are ſaid to *be the temples of God, and of the holy ghoſt*; and the apoſtle John teaches, iv. 16. *that he that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him:* Where the indwelling of God, plainly ſeems to mean that fellowſhip we have with him in the exerciſe of good affections.

In theſe particulars I have laid before you all that I need ſuggeſt, for explaining communion and fellowſhip with God. It conſiſts, you ſee, principally, in our being partakers of a divine nature: And, in purſuance of that, in our hearty concurrence in ſerving the great ends of the divine adminiſtration, and in the participation of happineſs reſulting from this

Sect. XVI. moral ſtate, and temper of mind. It conſiſts farther, in a firm confidence towards God, in reſting upon his power, his wiſdom, his goodneſs, as our own, that is, engaged to make us happy. Finally, it conſiſts in a conſtant intercourſe with the father of our ſpirits, in the exerciſe of mutual affection, in receiving daily favours from his hands, and making the proper returns of gratitude, duty, and obedience. And now I hope it does appear to you, that in all this, there is nothing contrary to reaſon, or out of nature, nothing of irrational enthuſiaſm: I am ſure it muſt appear to be a very important affair in the chriſtian life.

To preſerve the mind in a fit temper for fellowſhip with God, and for expreſſing it in ſuch exerciſes of the thoughts as have been deſcribed to you, will be of great uſe, both to our eſtabliſhment in virtue, and our happineſs. When once a man has good principles and diſpoſitions, how will it encourage him in doing his duty, in doing good, to reflect, that he is acting in concurrence with his creator that he is engaged in ſerving the ſame purpoſe, in which infinite power and wiſdom are engaged; that in this courſe of action, he is graciouſly accepted, and will be ſupported by the Creator and Ruler of all; that tho' he may miſs of his particular aim, yet he cannot miſs of the great end, namely, the greateſt public

public and common felicity, which the divine Sermon.
perfections and providence enſure: What XVI.
life and vigour will this give in doing good! The apoſtle Paul ſays concerning himſelf, that he and his other fellow labourers in the holy miniſtry, *were workers together with God*; now this may be truly ſaid concerning every man of virtue, in whatever ſtation or circumſtance he may be placed.

The univerſe is one vaſt ſcene, under the direction of the Supreme Being, wherein he has a glorious work of perfect goodneſs, which he is conſtantly carrying on. Created moral agents are not only capable of receiving happineſs from him themſelves; but of acting a part, by which they become ſubordinate cauſes of ſerving the purpoſes of providence, to themſelves and others, in promoting the felicity of the great whole. This ſtation is certainly very honourable. To ſhare in accompliſhing the deſigns of the Creator's grace and benignity, to be workers together with him, in the greateſt poſſible contrivance, the happy fruits of which ſhall ſubſiſt to all eternity.—Does not this thought give reſolution and vigour in doing all that we can do, each in the little circle of his influence? Does it not give every man of virtue a certain dignity and importance in his own eye, which is exceeding pleaſing? Can any thing more

SERM. XVI. effectually, than this generous ſentiment, ſuppreſs all narrow and ſelfiſh and impure affections of ſoul? Or any thing more effectually cure littleneſs of ſoul, which is one of the moſt fatal diſtempers? Does it not make ſelf-denial eaſy, and our choice? Can there be a ſpirit in us to indulge a diſpoſition and deſire, which tend to thwart the purpoſes of the Creator's benignity, and put us out of the way, out of the capacity, of acting a part the moſt generous and honourable that can be? Again, how amazingly does it raiſe our views of human nature, and our value for it, to think, that as we have fellowſhip with the Creator in the ſame diſpoſitions and ends of action, ſo we are capable of communion with him, in that kind of felicity which reſults from this! This ſpeaks a dignity of ſtate which wonderfully ſatisfies the mind; and to purſue after this honour and bliſs, is the truly laudable ambition, which ought to be encouraged, and ever ought to prevail in our natures. We can never have too much of it: And what an abhorrence and contempt of vicious courſes will not this beget in us! While theſe juſt, and generous, and manly ſentiments prevail, men will never profane themſelves with moral impurities. They will, from the beſt principles, abſtain from all appearances of evil; and contract a certain diſguſt,

guſt, when tempted to wicked things, which will very effectually guard their innocence. XVII.

Farther, how eaſy and happy will the mind find itſelf, and with what energy and vigour will it perform the duties of the Chriſtian life, with what firmneſs meet the difficulties, and bear the ſufferings of it, when men can look to God as their certain friend and preſent aid! When they can ſee that an Almighty arm embraces them; and that eternal wiſdom is employed in appointing their lot, and ordering all their circumſtances; when they know aſſuredly that nothing concerns them, but what is under the gracious notice of the Divine eye! This makes the world look ſmiling upon them; gives them a moſt delicate reliſh of exiſtence; fills them with good humour and alacrity; and makes every thing, to which they are called, ſit eaſy and light upon them. Unſpeakable the ſpirit and life, which firm and rational confidence towards God gives to the mind! Let a man be engaged in the greateſt and moſt important deſigns, the moſt difficult as well as weighty and in this faith, he will find refreſhment and reſt to his ſoul. Let him be ſurrounded with the greateſt appearances of danger, and *it* will give ſteadineſs and reſolution. *Thou, O Lord, art a ſhield for me, my glory and the lifter up of my head. I laid me down*

down and slept, and waked, for God sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands that have set themselves against me round about. Psalm. iii. How greatly pleasing to think that the voice of the thunder, the fierceness of the lightning, the internal powers of nature which make the earth to quake, the tempests which rage through the firmament on high, the dreadful waves of the tumultuous ocean, that all the powers of mankind, all the powers of the angelic world, are all equally under the control of the first being; of God, who is eternally a friend to the virtuous! and if he be their friend, all nature must really be so, for all nature is at his disposal. Infinite the advantages then of such a moral state of the mind! Would any wise man forfeit his pretensions to them, for the sake of gratifying any mean lust? Or by doing a wicked thing, to encrease his temporal gain? Would any wise man turn his back, or shrink from any severities of virtue? No surely; while such faith makes the mind easy, it becomes, at the same time, a most powerful principle of religious obedience; and gives nerves and vigour to the active powers, in doing whatever is commanded. And, to add no more under this head, how pleased and happy the mind in the intercourse of mutual love! And in receiving daily favours from

from Providence, as the pledges of it, and in the returns of gratitude, praise, and obedience! Such is the state in which the mind ought to be with respect to the Creator; and it is the most natural state imaginable. How reasonable is it, that when we are every moment receiving fresh favours from the hand of God, we should thankfully notice them, and be disposed to make the most grateful returns! And how happily will this prepare the mind for receiving still more, and for improving, to the best purposes, whatever is bestowed! How naturally will such an intercourse unite the affections, still more and more, to the Divine Being; and contribute to the establishment of those sentiments, which, while they give the mind sensible joy, tend at the same time to make it worthier and better.

In the next place, from what has been said concerning fellowship with God, some virtuous and good persons may find relief from discouragements which sometimes they may labour under, and which are owing to mistaken apprehensions concerning it. This subject has been, not unfrequently, explained in a way which tended to fill men's minds with enthusiasm. There are indeed, growing from fellowship with God, very joyful sensations of mind; and I have shewed you how natural

nal and rational theſe are. But it is a very wrong and unjuſt way of thinking, which confines the communion to theſe, or any other, ſenſible emotions of the ſpirit. For you have ſeen that the principal branches of it are quite different from theſe ſenſations, tending indeed to produce them, but not certainly, or always producing them; for this may be ſadly obſtructed by complexional infirmities, and depreſſion of the ſpirit; which is no more to be wondered at, than that men ſhould be virtuous and good, and in a ſtate of acceptance with God, without knowing aſſuredly that this is their ſtate: a caſe not at all uncommon. You evidently ſee, that there is not one good affection in the mind, nor one good action done by the hands, in which we have not fellowſhip with the Father, whether we are at preſent ſenſible of it, or not. In truth, in being good, and in doing good, our fellowſhip with him mainly conſiſts; and we ſhall be groſly miſtaken, if we think otherwiſe concerning it. 'Tis a participation of the Divine nature which is the foundation of all: and this is upheld by a conſtant courſe of the works of righteouſneſs. Therefore, let every one who has a conſciouſneſs of his integrity be aſſured, that he has real fellowſhip with God; and it is weakneſs and infirmity if he does not apply

to

to himself the consolation arising from it. For the application of this is not to be considered merely as a happiness, but also as a virtue; for you see, it has a tendency to produce the best effects. *Rejoice evermore*, is very properly given as a precept to Christians, whom it becomes *to rejoice in the Lord, and to give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* SERM. XVI.

To conclude the whole, from what has been said, the assertion of the apostle in my text, will appear so evidently true, as to need no farther illustration, viz. *that if we say we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness*, (that is in any unrighteous course) *we lie, and do not the truth.*

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

Of the reverence a man owes to himself, and the great importance of a just ſenſe of the dignity of human nature, as a preſervative from vice, and incentive to virtue.

CORINTH. III. 17.

For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

THE ſenſe of the honourable and ſhameful is a very important part of our conſtitution, and common to all, tho' very different, in the degree of ſtrength and delicacy, in different perſons, according to their natural complexion and temper, or the ſentiments they have received, and the habits they have contracted. When men act a part that is worthy of them, and by which they

they gain the esteem of others, a sense of honour, which they cannot but have upon reflection, gives them most sincere pleasure. On the contrary, when they act a bad part, and unworthy of them, a part offensive to others, and which tends to render them hateful and contemptible, the sense of this gives most pungent pain and uneasiness: And tho' men of the best and most ingenuous spirits, have this sense of shame in the greatest delicacy; yet there is hardly to be supposed any character so abandoned, as to have lost it utterly, and to be quite unmoved by glory or shame. It has been often observed, that this original sense of our nature is a most useful fence to virtue; and often prevents violations of it, when other, and indeed higher principles are too weak, and easily over-born: And when men have too little conscience to preserve their honour from the stain of criminal and base actions, it is well that their apprehensions of shame have power to do it. But, it is great pity, that there should be found characters, in whom the sense of honour and shame operates only with respect to those actions which are known to the world about them. Men who in public are very careful what part they act, but in the solitudes and undress of life take off the mask, and are capable of wicked and base things; they dread the

[illegible] that opinion and judgment of their fellow-creatures, and are bound perhaps very strongly by the law of reputation; but where no eye is upon them, they know no more honour or shame; considering themselves in moral affairs, just as those do in matter of dress, who should be at most exact pains to appear in public, clean, and neat, tho' at other times capable of sinking into naftiness and filth; shewing in such conduct great regard and reverence to the world, but none at all to themselves. A person of true taste in life will always act very differently from this. While he expresses a decent regard to the eye of the spectator, he maintains, at the same time, a reverence for himself; and would abhor what is base, impure, and indecent, were no eye upon him but his own. Thus, in morals, 'tis in truth, a poor character, which labours to put on plausible appearances to others, and is ashamed of doing a mean or ill thing before the world, but will stop at nothing in secret; shewing some, perhaps much reverence to the opinion of mankind, but none at all to the dignity of his own nature. A man of true probity and worth knows honour and shame in the most secret scenes and actions of life; for his own eye must be constantly upon him. And there is in every man a conscience from which nothing can

be

be concealed. This will, if men attend to it, naturally lead them to judge of their actions by a ſenſe of the dignity of human nature as their rule, will reproach and fill them with a painful ſenſe of ſhame, when they do what is unworthy of and beneath them, and reward, with a pleaſing ſenſe of honour and true glory, what they do worthy of nature and ornamental to it. And to thoſe feelings, which are independent of the applauſes and cenſures of the world, and which take poſſeſſion of the mind on occaſion of ſome of the moſt ſecret actions, the ingenuous mind, the man of true worth and taſte principally attends. He reverences no creature ſo much as himſelf; that is, he ſtands more in awe of profaning his own dignity, than of ſhame before the world; and has a much more pleaſing ſenſe of internal honour, that is, the approbation of his conſcience in doing what was worthy of him, than of external glory. This is doing juſtice to himſelf, and this is what I propoſe to recommend to you in the preſent diſcourſe. SERM. XVII.

The terms glory and honour, and thoſe of ſhame and ignominy, have been ſo generally and conſtantly uſed to expreſs the light in which our characters and actions appear to others, according to the quality of them and of the agent, and our ſenſe of this, and the

SERM. XVII. feelings and affections of the mind, which naturally attend it, that if we uſe them in diſcourſing upon the preſent ſubject, they muſt really have a quite different meaning from that which they are generally uſed to expreſs. And yet our language does not afford any terms more proper to ſignify that ſenſe which I am now ſpeaking of. However, the matter is not great, what words are uſed, if we have the ſame idea and know what is meant: And I think no man can miſs of this, who reflects upon his own ſenſations. No man but who has a ſenſe of dignity in his nature, his powers, his ſtation in the univerſe. No man but has a ſenſe *ſuitable* to this dignity, and *unſuitable*. Now, that regard which a man owes to his own dignity, and which, where it prevails, will forbid his doing any thing unworthy of it; that reverence he owes to himſelf, will give him pleaſing ſatisfaction when he acts a worthy part, and fill him with pain when he does what is mean and baſe; what is really a proſtitution and profanation of himſelf. This ſenſe of pain, for want of a proper word, we muſt call ſhame. In the common acceptation of that word, the pain which men feel, ariſes from their apprehenſions of what the world thinks of them; as I now uſe it, it ſignifies the pain we feel ariſing from a compariſon of our conduct, when it has been mean,

mean, with the dignity of our nature and ſtate; Sermon this, not the opinion of the world, is the ob- XVII. ject of the painful affection. In a word, every man owes more reverence to his nature, powers, and moral ſtate, than to all the world; and every ingenuous mind will ſuffer more pain in a ſenſe of having profaned them, than in any ſhame to which the world can put him.

That this ſubject may appear in a proper light, we muſt conſider the dignity which belongs to us as men, and as chriſtians, and alſo the dignity of ſtation by which ſome are diſtinguiſhed from others; which, tho' of little moment when compared with the other moſt important conſiderations, yet is not altogether unworthy of notice, and may be improved to valuable purpoſes.

No one who conſiders it, but muſt acknowledge that there is ſomething great and noble in the powers of human nature. *There is a ſpirit in man, and the inſpiration of the Almighty gives him underſtanding*, far ſuperior to the birds of the air and the beaſts of the field. The pre-eminence of the human ſpecies, above all others in this lower world, is in a fine manner repreſented to us by the inſpired author of the hiſtory of the Creation, *Gen.* i. 26. When God had made all the other creatures, he is introduced as ſaying, *let us make man in*

Sect. XVII. *our image, and after our likeneſs, and let him have dominion over the fiſh of the ſea, over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.* In purſuance of this counſel, man was made. In the ſtructure of his body, of an erect form; and in the majeſty of his countenance, diſtinguiſhed from all the brutal orders; and like one who was to rule over them. But this external viſible diſtinction, however pleaſing to the eye, is little when compared with the powers and faculties of the ſpirit which was breathed into man. He was endowed with great compaſs of underſtanding, capable of contemplating the Creator and his works, capable of the knowledge of truth, and of a progreſs in it which knows no limit or end; with great delicacy of imagination, which is an inlet to a vaſt variety of pleaſures; with wonderful paſſions and affections, fitting him for the ſocial life for which he was intended; above all endowed with a ſenſe of good and evil, of moral beauty and deformity; in this he is moſt of all diſtinguiſhed from the ſeveral inferior orders in animal life, moſt expreſsly bears the divine image, and is capable of the imitation of God, formed by this excellent power for the moſt exalted, for divine pleaſures, and nearly related to the ſuperior orders of being. The other

powers

powers of the mind are indeed excellent, this Serm. is ſacred; by his other faculties man is ren- XVII. dered ſuperior to the brutes, by this he is rendered holy, God-like. And as man was in his original frame and powers exalted over all the other creatures, ſo theſe are all given into his power; their ſervice, their lives are his, and, by the donation of the Creator, all beſtowed for the ſubſiſtence of his life, and to render it comfortable. But all theſe advantages are crowned with the proſpect of an endleſs duration, and of endleſs improvements in knowledge and moral worth; and thereby of an advancement in true excellency which knows no limit. What high regards are due to ſuch a frame, to ſuch powers and advantages! How ſenſibly are we touched by any thing we account an indignity done to us by others! In what keen paſſions are our reſentments of it ſeen to appear! But, alas! no indignity done to us by others can hurt us as the indignities men do to themſelves. This admirable frame of nature, theſe excellent and ſacred powers are given into the truſt and conduct of every man. We are not placed under a phyſical neceſſity, or, which is much the ſame, a neceſſity of inſtinct, by which we ſhould be moved and acted upon in ſuch a manner as infallibly to anſwer the end of our being, which is the caſe of the ſeveral ſpecies

Serm. in the brutal world, but is not at all consist-
XVII. tent with the moral frame and powers of human nature, and the great design of them; but we are endowed with a freedom of choice, and a power of acting according to it; and as by choosing and acting well, we do honour to human nature, and answer the Creator's design; so by choosing and acting ill, we profane the glory and sanctity of our nature, and render that, which is capable of the highest advancement, and of shining in the noblest moral beauties, the most hateful and contemptible thing in the creation; for as no brute creature is capable of such attainments as the human kind, so none of them are capable of such prostitution, and of becoming so odious. How unnatural then the part they act who so prophane themselves! And how becoming is it, that every man should have such a sense of his own dignity, as will oblige him to act up, and do justice to it; and forbid every thing that is mean and abominable! That every man should maintain a sacred regard to the high honours of humanity, and to the demands of self-esteem!

But this argument will appear still in a stronger light, when we have considered how much the original dignity of human nature is improved by the grace of the gospel.

As

As Chriſtians, we are called to the higheſt ſanctity, privileges, and are aſſured of a moſt glorious XVII. immortality. It is a high honour done to human nature that the ſon of God vouchſafed to aſſume it. *He took not on him the nature of angels, but the ſeed of* Abraham, and, *in all things* he was *made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high prieſt in things pertaining to God?* Heb. ii. 16. By our relation to him as brethren, we are related to the Father of all as his children. We become *heirs of God and joint heirs with Chriſt.* We are called to communion in the bleſſings of his kingdom, and the glory of his exalted ſtate, to a communion in the joy that makes himſelf happy. This high advancement and happineſs is the fruit of a mighty apparatus in the Divine adminiſtration, and of the moſt aſtoniſhing counſels. The ſon of God muſt be incarnate, He muſt, with all the characters of a Divine power about him, converſe for ſome years in our world, ſubmitting, notwithſtanding his high dignity, to all the ſinleſs infirmities of human nature; he muſt be perſecuted and a deep ſufferer: he muſt die, and miraculouſly riſe again from the dead, aſcend up on high, and be inveſted with the dominion over all worlds, and have the adminiſtration of all affairs given into his hands. Amazing coun-

Serm. XVII.

sel for our redemption! 'Tis represented in scripture as the wonder of angels and the subject of their loftiest songs. Now, as this contrivance and the execution of it, which in every part strikes the attentive mind with surprize, gives us the strongest assurance imaginable that the state of the *redeemed*, which is intended as the fruit and end of this great work, shall be perfectly glorious and happy; so it wonderfully raises our sense of the dignity and importance of human nature, for the redemption of which, from a state guilty and wretched, the whole was undertaken. How valuable must mankind appear in the Divine eye! *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have eternal life.* And surely then he valued and loved them beyond all expression. Ought not we therefore to study to do justice to the dignity of our own nature, to maintain such a regard to ourselves, as become creatures so much noticed, and who are of such importance in the creation of God? Should we not abhor the thoughts of doing any thing which will be a stain and dishonour to our natures, and study to make the glory of them (matchless by any thing in this world) shine with its proper lustre? Should we not take care to get into a thorough sense of what we owe to ourselves

as

as men and as chriſtians? Ought any mean Sect. XVII.
thought to be entertained in our minds, or
any mean action to be done by our hands?
This ſenſe of dignity will inſpire us with a certain ambition and greatneſs of mind which are perfectly becoming, and prepare us to act from principles and views, and to form and purſue deſigns, and to breathe deſires that are ſuitable to our frame. Ambition, which is indeed one of the moſt important of virtues. Nothing a-kin to that pride and haughtineſs of ſpirit, which fixes upon as its object, and is inflated and ſwelled up on account of, little external temporal honours and diſtinctions, (ſuch as parentage, wealth, ſtrength, or beauty) while it neglects the great common advantages of our ſtate as men and chriſtians. Valuing itſelf upon the little differences by which one man of worth may be diſtinguiſhed from another, more than upon thoſe honours with which human nature in general is crowned, and the moral improvements of which it is capable. This unhappy caſt of temper, inſtead of enlarging the heart, naturally tends to make it little, really contracts the ſoul, and debaſes it; and accordingly we ſhall find, that tho' pride aſſumes to itſelf a lofty mien, and a haughty air, yet its views and deſigns are little and low; and its entertainments poor, and, comparatively, inſignificant.

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cant. Virtuous ambition grows from a juſt ſenſe of the dignity common to us as men and chriſtians; it inſpires ſentiments and views worthy of theſe characters; and which therefore muſt be great and generous. It breathes a ſpirit which becomes the children of God, the heirs of immortality, the proſpect of the moſt ſolid glory above, and the neareſt union to that being, who is the original ſource of all derived exiſtence, perfection, and bliſs. No wonder, then, that when it thoroughly poſſeſſes the ſoul, every thing baſe and impure, every thing little and mean, ſhould be baniſhed; that all undue regards to private temporal intereſt ſhould be ſuppreſſed; and that human nature ſhould be looked upon as the moſt rich and glorious of all poſſeſſions.

But I know of no expreſſions in the Holy Scriptures which ſet this matter in a ſtronger or more affecting light, than thoſe of my text. *Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the ſpirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man defile the temple of God, him ſhall God deſtroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.* Human nature then is the dwelling-place of the divinity. Thus the ſame author, 2 Cor. vi. 16. *For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath ſaid, I will dwell in them, and walk in them.* God is every where preſent, and the whole univerſe may

may be ſaid to be his temple. The moral world, intelligent creatures, are no doubt more particularly the objects of his notice. But his preſence is more peculiarly ſtill with the virtuous and good. There is nothing inconſiſtent with the ſoundeſt philoſophy, in ſuppoſing that there is an immediate agency of the firſt being upon the minds of men; and that light and life, from the glorious fountain of it, are derived to them: That the joy of the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be ſhed abroad in their hearts, and that divine influence, or, as the ſcriptures ſpeak, *divine inhabitation*, ſhould greatly aid them in moral improvement, and be the ſource of their higheſt joy. But ſurely, this inhabitation of the divinity renders human nature not only honourable, but ſacred. We owe great reverence to ourſelves as the living temples of God; and this view of our ſtate makes every thing that is evil, appear the more odious, as it is the profanation of what ought to be kept holy. *If any man defile the temple of God, him ſhall God deſtroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*

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To conclude this head, although any diſtinction which ariſes from temporal dignity, or eminency of ſtation in the world, is but of ſmall account when compared with the advantages common to us as men and Chriſtians;

SERM. XVII. tians; yet it has pleaſed God to appoint it, and it is neceſſary for the good of ſociety, that there ſhould be differences of ſtation, power, dignity, and endowments of various kinds. Some are more eminent than others in the gifts of nature and fortune; ſome are entruſted with power and authority, others are obliged to obey; ſome have raiſed themſelves to great eminency by uncommon merit, in particular offices and callings; now, whatever diſtinction a man enjoys by eminency of ſtation in any of theſe reſpects, there is a regard due to it from himſelf; and it ought to be his care always to act a part that becomes it. What is very becoming in low life would be very indecent in a high ſtation; and what is honourable in one man, would be juſtly accounted ſhameful to another. This is ſo plain from innumerable inſtances that it needs no illuſtration. In a word, whatever dignity men enjoy by nature, or as Chriſtians, or whatever dignity of ſtation is added to theſe, it becomes an ingenuous mind to do juſtice to it, and to regulate life ſo, that in all parts of it, there ſhall be the *decent* and *ſuitable*; that is, men ought always to act in character, and never ſo much conſider what it is in their power to do, as what becomes them to do. Having ſaid ſo much to explain the reverence we owe to ourſelves, and the

the foundations of it, as they are laid in the dignity of nature, or the advantages and honours which are additional to it; I now proceed to recommend to you the maintaining of this reverence conſtantly in your minds, and making the ſenſe of honour habitual to them, as what tends to produce the very beſt effects. SECT. XVII.

And firſt of all, it will be a very effectual preſervative from the ſnares of vain glory and vicious ſhame. There may happen caſes, and they often have happened, in which the ſenſe of the multitude ſhall be againſt men, when they are acting the beſt and moſt virtuous part; when what is really their glory ſhall be turned, ſo far as the guiſe of the world can turn it, into their ſhame. And, on the other hand, the general and faſhionable opinion may be ſo perverted, that it ſhall hallow what is really diſhonourable and evil, and put marks of honourable diſtinction upon men for doing what is really ſhameful. This ſtate of things to men, who are not capable, who have not accuſtomed themſelves to do juſtice to themſelves, cannot fail of proving a great ſnare. They immediately fall into baſe compliances; court honour and applauſe, tho' at the expence of doing evil, perhaps even when they are ſenſible it is evil; and avoid a ſingularity attended with ſhame, tho' at the expence

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nence of neglecting their duty, and giving up a generous and good cauſe. Alas! how many have ſuffered this way, careful to procure honour from others, but not at all careful to do honour to themſelves! revering ſenſeleſs, faſhionable opinions and ways, and the multitudes which go into them, but not paying any reverence to their own underſtandings and conſciences. What a mean appearance muſt ſuch characters make in the eye of impartial judges! How much beneath nature do they act! But this is not all, nor the worſt of it; for they are often betrayed into very ill things, and purchaſe eſteem and reputation at the expence of every thing worthy and good. The man who knows how to do juſtice to himſelf will never fall into ſuch ſnares. He will purſue ſteadily his own underſtanding, the conviction of his own judgment, the light of his own conſcience. He will neglect all the world when ſet in oppoſition to theſe. He is fixed and immoveable in his virtuous ſingularity; I call it virtuous, for it muſt be ſo to him, when he is purſuing his own deliberate judgment, as the fruit of a careful and impartial inquiry. He will have more reverence for his own conſcience, than for all the world: And his having a juſt ſenſe of the dignity of human nature, and of what he owes to himſelf, will give him a greatneſs

of

of mind, which will not only make him inflexible, but pleaſed in acting this part, as it is really a worthy part. Thus, you evidently ſee that we can have no ſecurity, that a man ſhall act worthily without it. If his principles, his way of life are to be formed and regulated by no rule, but the caprice of faſhion, it is mere accident whether he is right or wrong; and if he purſues eſteem and reputation at any rate, he muſt change as the world does, and put on different characters as they would have him. How more generous he who acts the part his own heart dictates, ſcorns a compliance which contradicts it, and deſpiſes the honour which muſt be acquired at the expence of being untrue to himſelf. In this character we have the beſt ſecurity we can have, of ſteadineſs and uniformity, and of truth and righteouſneſs: And never do men appear in a more honourable light, than when a ſenſe of what they owe to themſelves, makes them incapable of ſubmitting to the impoſitions of others, and when they prefer internal honour, the approbation of their own hearts, to the applauſes of all the world. This is doing juſtice to the dignity of nature: And to this we owe ſome of the moſt illuſtrious characters, and uſeful ſervices, with which the hiſtory of the world preſents us. Without the prevalence of ſuch a ſpirit, chriſtianity

could never have obtained in the world; without it the Proteſtant religion could never have obtained in the Chriſtian world; nor indeed any reformation, againſt which prevailing and faſhionable ſentiments and cuſtoms were oppoſed.

But then, as ſuch a ſpirit will make a man capable of ſtanding alone in defence of what he knows to be juſt and right, and make him deſpiſe the applauſes of the world, compared and ſet in oppoſition with the approbation of his own heart, ſo it will raiſe him quite above all the meanneſſes of an hypocritical temper. He regards firſt the teſtimony of his conſcience, and ſeeks to be approved of himſelf; the opinion of others concerning him appears to be of ſmall moment, when compared to this. He will not do an ill thing, though he could conceal it from the world, becauſe he cannot conceal it from himſelf. In his own breaſt ſits the judge whom he reveres, and whoſe ſentence he dreads. He will do what is good, not to obtain applauſe, but to do juſtice to his own conſcience. Thus his life will be regular though no mortal were to behold it. He ſits in ſtrict judgment upon his own accounts. The great queſtion is not, what others think or know concerning me, but what is becoming and unbecoming myſelf as a man, and a chriſtian; not

not what the world thinks concerning this or the other action of my life, but what nature, what conſcience ſay. An hypocrite muſt be an utter ſtranger to theſe generous ſentiments; he pays great reſpect to others, but none to himſelf; and every man muſt acknowledge that this is a mean and moſt worthleſs character. The man who pays juſt regard to himſelf will always act a part ſimple, open, and frank; and as his ſpirit will abhor deceitful appearances, ſo his life will have no need of them. Where there is no deformity to be covered, paint is quite uſeleſs.

Theſe reflections naturally lead to the next thing I would inſiſt on, viz. That the ſpirit I am recommending will be a mighty preſervative from the impurities of vice. There is ſomething in theſe, in all the various kinds of them, that is mean, and what an ingenuous mind muſt hate as ſhameful. To illuſtrate this, we need only obſerve the abhorrence of ſome particular vices, which men of generous ſpirits expreſs, tho' they are, perhaps very vicious in other reſpects. They will indulge themſelves in vices by which they think their honour is not affected; but an action which (according to their ſenſe of things) is a ſtain to their honour, they would die rather than be guilty of it. They have

then a ſenſe of dignity which makes them utterly incapable of ſome vices. But why are they ſo abhorrent of ſome, and eaſy in other vices? Treachery or ingratitude they cannot bear the thoughts of, but have no abhorrence of intemperance and the impurities of the fleſh. Surely every thing vicious is abominable. Some vices indeed have a peculiar meanneſs and baſeneſs in them; but no vice but what is a reproach to nature, and ſtains the dignity of it. Why then this partiality? Surely it muſt be owing to the prejudice, and the biaſs of powerful luſts: And the man who thinks juſtly and impartially muſt ſee this. Well, then, if every vice is really a ſtain to nature, and a profanation of the dignity of it, there cannot be a more natural preſervative from vice than a juſt ſenſe, and a high eſteem of the dignity of nature. This begets a greatneſs of mind which renders it too proud to be wicked. The perſon whoſe mind is poſſeſſed of it, as it ought to be, will look upon vice of every kind, and ſee it in the ſame light, as the man of honour would upon turning his back in the field; as the generous man would upon cruelly oppreſſing the widow, or entering into the fields of the fatherleſs; as the ingenuous mind would upon treachery in friendſhip, or the various methods of trick and deceit. Such a purity of

temper

temper does naturally grow from a juſt reverence for ourſelves. The mind becomes ſenſible of a glory ſhed upon human nature, which is the nobleſt enjoyment, and which nothing but vice can profane and deſtroy; and while ſuch an eſtimation of nature obtains, temptations to vice muſt have but ſmall power. SERM. XVII.

But ſurely this ſenſe, for the ſame reaſon that it is a preſervative from vice, muſt alſo be a powerful incentive to virtue. He who has a taſte for true honour, muſt have that commendable ambition which conſtantly deſires the encreaſe of it; and as it can be encreaſed no otherwiſe than by the practice of virtue, his ambition muſt conſtantly ſtir him up to that, and give life and vigour to all his endeavours, reconciling him to any labour or difficulty by which the admired crown may ſhine the brighter. So the heroes who rejoice in the diſtinctions of the field, as the greateſt and moſt deſirable attainments, never think they have done enough, while there is any thing more to be done, any laurels to be yet obtained; ſo the man of corrupt ambition never thinks he has power enough, while he has a ſuperior, perhaps, while he has an equal; and the covetous creature, whoſe glory, whoſe divinity, is his treaſure, never thinks he has enough while he may

Serm. XVII. have more. If we know ourſelves, and what ſolid honour really is, we ſhall undoubtedly be very diligent in doing what may encreaſe it, and by degrees attain to a ſtock, in which we ſhall have more ſatisfaction than ever hero taſted in his triumphs, or the ambitious in his having no equal.

For, in the third place, this ſpirit will give the moſt generous, and therefore the moſt ſincerely pleaſing enjoyment of life. This ſame intellectual, moral, being, we are poſſeſſed of, is originally a noble and excellent thing. No man but muſt be ſenſible of great pleaſure in enjoying it. No thought more gloomy and diſconſolate, than our being ſtript of it; except the proſpect of endleſs pain and miſery in it. But it is moral improvement which finiſhes human nature, and makes it lovely; and it is this which yields the calm, the ſincere and uninterrupted joy which virtuous minds taſte; a joy that is quite independent of fortune or the viciſſitudes of it, of the power of men, or the powers of darkneſs; and the man who knows, and does juſtice to himſelf, poſſeſſes a noble inheritance in the poſſeſſion of himſelf. To reflect upon and enjoy human nature in its perfection, cannot but reliſh: And that reverence which we owe to the dignity of it, tho' it may put us upon ſome ſeverities of diſcipline,

diſcipline, yet it amply rewards us with the moſt exquiſite reliſhes of the nobleſt pleaſure. He who fears and reveres himſelf will be ſure of the trueſt enjoyment of himſelf, and he that knows how to regard and do juſtice to the man, will not fail of being a happy man.

It may be added laſtly, that tho' the ſpirit and temper I have been recommending may, in many inſtances, have the world againſt it, and muſt act in contradiction to the ſentiments and modes which obtain in it, yet, generally ſpeaking, the ſureſt way for a man to be eſteemed of others, is to do juſtice to himſelf. He who ſeems not to know what becomes him, cannot reaſonably expect that others ſhould pay him regard: And when men proſtitute and profane humanity in themſelves, what but contempt and diſregard can be their portion from others. Eſteem will be procured by nothing but true worth, or the appearances of it; theſe, however plauſible, may be found out to be only appearances, and all the honour which was paid to them, will be turned into averſion and diſdain. But true worth will beget eſteem, and maintain it: and no man who acts from the principle of regarding his own dignity, and doing juſtice to it, but will act a worthy part. This character will inherit love, while the mean, the fawning, and compliant, will

Serm. XVII. be looked upon with contempt: and very justly, for the ends of social life can never be happily answered by such men: We never can have any dependence upon them. What security can I have that a man will be true to me, who is not true to himself? What reason to expect that he will act a worthy part, in whom a sense of true worth has no place? Will he act to my honour, or be sollicitous for it, who profanes his own? Will he justly regard me, who can prostitute himself?

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

The relation of friendſhip conſidered; the foundation upon which it reſts; the particular virtues which qualify for it, and the high happineſs reſulting from it.

PROVERBS XVIII. 24.

——There is a friend that ſticketh cloſer than a brother.

I Propoſe in this diſcourſe to treat of friendſhip, which I think is one of the nobleſt, and, if I might uſe ſuch an expreſſion, the moſt elegant relation, of which human nature is capable. It tends unſpeakably to the improvement of the mind; and the pleaſures which reſult from it are moſt ſincere and delightful. You will eaſily per-

SERM. XVIII. ceive from this account of it, that I am not ſpeaking of what in our common converſation, is often called friendſhip; and is no more, perhaps, than a general correſpondence in the exchange of ſome kind offices, where there is little intimacy, generoſity, or tenderneſs of affection; and where poſſibly the whole ſubſiſts upon ſome low ſordid views and intereſts; but of that generous union of ſouls, I had almoſt ſaid devotion to one another, that ſincere and fervent love of ſpirits, which is attended with a perfect openneſs of heart, and unreſerved intimacy; which makes men's intereſts one, and their joys and ſorrows common; to which the greateſt tenderneſs and delicacy of affection is neceſſary; and which is infinitely above every mean and ſelfiſh view; for in truth, men who are joined in ſuch friendſhip, if you will pardon the impropriety of the expreſſion, are to have but *one ſelf* between them.

I am very ſenſible that ſuch friendſhip is very rarely to be found; very rare indeed the characters which are capable of it. And however pleaſing the picture we may frame in our imaginations of it, yet the mind looks up to it with regret, as ſubſiſting only in fancy, as hardly any where to be equalled in life. Yet that we may not do injuſtice to human nature,

nature, it muſt be owned, that there have been inſtances, in which this ſacred love of minds has appeared, with as great dignity and fervor as can well be imagined. Some have found *friends that ſtick cloſer than brothers.* And ſeeing human nature is capable even of ſo great a thing, as this noble diſintereſted friendſhip, I hope it will not be thought altogether uſeleſs to diſcourſe particularly upon it. I am ſure to ingenuous minds it cannot but be pleaſing, to view nature in it's moſt elegant refinements; and in that point of light, in which, of all others, it appears by far the moſt beautiful and happy.

It is an obſervation of the beſt writers upon this ſubject, that friendſhip cannot ſubſiſt but between perſons of real worth; for friendſhip muſt be founded upon high eſteem: But ſuch eſteem cannot be, at leaſt it cannot be rational and laſting, where there is not true moral worth. This is the proper object of eſteem, and no natural advantages will do without it. Suppoſe a man had wit, courage, ſtrength, parentage, and every thing you can name of that kind, to recommend him; yet if he is without purity of manners, honeſty, benevolence, and faithfulneſs, we cannot eſteem him; and if we cannot eſteem, we cannot love him as a friend. Beſides, in friendſhip there muſt be a certain likeneſs,

and

and conſent of ſoul, a conſent in the great ends and views of life, and alſo in the principal methods and conduct of it; and this conſent is effectually begot and ſecured, only by true probity and goodneſs; this is the ſame in every one, and forms the mind into the ſame ſentiments, and gives it the ſame views and deſigns in all the moſt important affairs of life. Good ſpirits therefore are kindred ſpirits, and reſemble one another. But what is principally to be conſidered is this, that no friendſhip can bind a man to do an ill thing. Our obligations to be virtuous and good are prior, and ſuperior to all the obligations of friendſhip. And therefore, ſhould the moſt intimate friend tempt a man to tranſgreſs, he muſt be reſiſted and thwarted. A good mind cannot comply with him; and we can have no ſecurity in friendſhip with a bad man; nor know how ſoon it may be neceſſary to break with him. Friendſhip then muſt be built upon the principles of virtue and honour; and cannot ſubſiſt otherwiſe. But, in truth, a bad man is not capable of being a friend; there is a certain greatneſs of ſoul, a benevolence, a faithfulneſs, an ingenuity, neceſſary to friendſhip, which are abſolutely inconſiſtent with a bad moral character.

But, tho' every true friend be a good man, yet every good man is not fit to be a friend.

A perſon's character may be, in the general, a good one, and yet he may want many qualities which are neceſſary to friendſhip; ſuch as, firſt, generoſity; friendſhip abhors every thing that is narrow and contracted. It ſacrifices little views, and intereſts, very readily; and lays itſelf open to inconvenience, danger, and ſuffering, when theſe become neceſſary to ſerve a friend. In a word, it does for a friend as it would do for itſelf; nay, upon many occaſions much more. Now, let a man's character, in other reſpects, be never ſo good and valuable, if there is any thing mean, and contracted in his ſpirit, he is incapable of friendſhip; he cannot enter into the ſtate, he cannot taſte the joys, or ſhare the ſorrows, of his friend; he cannot do, and ſuffer, for him, as that ſacred relation requires.

To generoſity muſt be added tenderneſs of affection. Jonathan *loved* David *as his own ſoul.* There is a certain ſtupidity, and unconcernedneſs about ſome men, which makes them abſolutely incapable of any thing ſo refined as friendſhip. They have no delicacy of affection, they are not moved by the joys or ſorrows of others; and things which do much affect tender minds, make no impreſſion at all upon them. The friendly mind does, with great tenderneſs, enter into all the circumſtances and ſentiments of his companion; can

can be affected with all his cares and fears, his joys and ſorrows. Every thing is of importance to him that is ſo to his friend. And this tenderneſs of affection begets that ſtrange but affecting harmony of ſouls, if I might term it ſo, like the cords of two muſical inſtruments ſtrained to the ſame key, where, if one of them is touched any wiſe, the ſound is communicated to the other. Where there is true friendſhip there muſt be an exquiſite mutual feeling. And when I have ſaid that the affection muſt be tender, this is ſaying too that it muſt be undiſſembled. Sincerity in love is eſſential to friendſhip, Jonathan *loved* David *as his own ſoul.* We muſt love our friends as ourſelves; love them, not from any private ſelfiſh views, or advantages, (which is indeed impoſſible, for theſe cannot beget love, tho' they may the profeſſions of it,) but ſo as to delight in them as in ourſelves; and in their happineſs as our own, for it's own ſake: Making delight in them, making their happineſs the ultimate end of our affection, and of all the offices of our friendſhip: Being as much pleaſed in their glory as our own, and in any advantages they enjoy, as if we enjoyed them ourſelves: So *Jonathan* was affected towards *David.* So every friend, every true friend, will be affected to the perſon to whom he is joined in a relation ſo ſacred.

I add, that there muſt be in ſuch friendſhip great openneſs and frankneſs of ſpirit; there muſt be a communication of ſecrets, without reſerve; unleſs that reſerve neceſſarily ariſes from, and is cauſed by friendſhip, for this ſacred relation cannot bear any other. It is one general end of friendſhip, to have one to whom we can communicate our inmoſt ſouls, all our cares and fears, all our joys and ſorrows. Human nature very much wants and needs this: And where this end of friendſhip cannot be ſafely anſwered, the moſt important and pleaſing end of it cannot be anſwered; and therefore, as ſuch friendſhip will prove to be of little value, it will quickly come to nothing. A dark and reſerved mind cannot be a friendly one. It has indeed been given as a rule in friendſhip, that we ſhould always carry it to our friend as ſuppoſing that, ſome time or other, he may become our enemy; and accordingly maintain proper reſerves in our communication with him, that we may never be in his power. This rule has a good deal of cunning in it, I own; but is, at the ſame time, what the generoſity of friendſhip, in it's moſt perfect ſtate, cannot ſubmit to: For the very obſerving of ſuch a rule implies a ſuſpicion of our friend: And where there is any the moſt remote ſuſpicion, friendſhip cannot be perfect: It is a thing

that

that abhors all jealouſy, and cunning, and ſkill management: It is open, and frank, and ingenuous. But as this is indeed the caſe with perfect friends, and muſt be the caſe, it ſhews how cautious we ſhould be in the choice we make of perſons for that relation: And that we ſhould not admit men into that intimacy, without a thorough knowledge of them, and long trial of their ſpirits.

But, although a friend muſt be ingenuous and open-hearted, a man of ſimplicity, and whoſe very heart, if I might uſe the expreſſion, is tranſparent to his friend, yet he muſt be diſcreet and prudent; capable of concealing from others what ought to be concealed; capable of managing, in any thing that is committed to his care, with wiſdom. When men betray indiſcreet openneſs, imprudence and folly, friendſhip with them, inſtead of anſwering it's end by promoting the happineſs and comfort of life, muſt be greatly hurtful, and produce moſt miſchievous conſequences. Beſides, where ſuch imprudence and weakneſs appears, eſteem will neceſſarily be leſſen'd, and friendſhip ſuffer in proportion with it. Men muſt not be put to the bluſh, they muſt not ſuffer by their friends diſingenuity; unfaithfulneſs is the very worſt thing that can happen in friendſhip; and next to that, weakneſs and imprudence; which, tho' they do not ſpeak ſo bad a mind,

a mind, yet may be the cauſe of as great miſ-
chief; and make it impoſſible for friendſhip
to ſubſiſt.

Again, it is neceſſary to the character of a friend, that he ſhould be of a conſtant temper, directed by reaſon, and acting unchangeably according to its direction. There is an unconſtant humour and fickleneſs in ſome tempers, that you can never know where to find, or how to be ſure of them: Their loves and averſions are continually changing, and ſo are their views and purpoſes: Without any good reaſon they chooſe, and without any good reaſon refuſe: They are in one mind to-day, and in another to-morrow. This, for ought I know, ſhould rather be conſidered as their misfortune than fault. But however that be, it makes them incapable of friendſhip. A true friend is always the ſame; that is, his ſentiments and conduct never change, but when there is reaſon for it. You find him the ſame man that you left him; and may depend upon his always being ſo. He is not only faithful and honeſt in his diſpoſitions, but conſtant in his ſpirit; firm and reſolved, not to be moved by humour, not to be ſhocked by danger; I ſay not to be ſhocked by danger; for indeed, as a man cannot be conſtant without courage, ſo without ſome good meaſure of courage and reſolution, no man is fit to be a

friend.

friend. A fearful temper will betray men into mean things, which the dignity of friendſhip abhors; and perhaps into unfaithfulneſs, which muſt neceſſarily ſtrike at the very life of it. There is no ſure dependence upon a feeble ſoul; and ſo there can be no faſt friendſhip with him.

But there is one particular in which the firmneſs of a friendly mind is as much tried, as in any other, and that is, in reſiſting any ſollicitation to do a thing that may be in itſelf bad, or indiſcreet, or hurtful to him that deſires it. Very often tenderneſs of affection is accompanied with a feebleneſs of mind, which can hardly refuſe any thing to the one we love; and is prompted to gratify, though it be greatly to the prejudice of the perſon we mean to oblige, and even when we are convinced of this. But however excuſable this exceſs of good nature may appear, it is certainly a very dangerous weakneſs, and may be of very bad conſequence, for, to act a part truly friendly, it may be upon many occaſions, neceſſary, that we know how to refuſe: There muſt not be a compliance in every thing. What is right and fit muſt always be our rule: And we ought to obſerve it inviolably, not only becauſe the obligation to this is ſuperior to all the obligations of friendſhip, but alſo from principles of kindneſs and benevolence. Next to the firmneſs that ought

ought to be maintained in denying what is hurtful, there ought to be a reſolution in animadverting upon faults. This is the moſt friendly and uſeful office imaginable; and an office to which an affectionate mind does with difficulty bring itſelf. To admoniſh and rebuke, is to put one to great pain; and whatever gives pain to a friend, is gone about with reluctancy and averſion: Yet there is no true faithfulneſs when this is not done; and it is one of the nobleſt ends of friendſhip.

Nor can any thing give more ſatisfaction to an ingenuous mind, than to be thus intimately related to one, who he knows, will uſe faithful freedom with him; and prudently animadvert upon all his weakneſſes. This is a noble, and moſt uſeful ſecurity to a man; and a defence from the unhappy influence of that partiality, which very often makes us blind to our own defects, and go heedleſly on in what is diſagreeable, or hurtful to both.

But, tho' ſtrict virtue is neceſſary as the foundation of true friendſhip, and great freedom ought to be uſed in animadverting upon faults; yet intimate friendſhip does not bear any rigid ſeverity, any haughty ſtiffneſs of manners. It expects ſweetneſs, and gentleneſs, and condeſcendency, ſo far as innocence

SERM. XVIII. and virtue will allow. There is in some very good and worthy characters a certain sourness, and distance, which creates awe, but at the same time dislike: This some men cannot lay aside even in their greatest intimacies; they have nothing of the meekness and complaisance of good nature, even when their dispositions are good and benevolent: This hurts friendship, which is a tender and delicate thing, and cannot flourish but where it finds an easiness and sweetness of temper, and disposition to comply with the humours and way of another; where that compliance is consistent with the rules of truth, virtue, and honour.

Again, friendship abhors all jealousy; a disposition to be suspicious, where there is no just cause given. This is the inseparable attendant of some, little, gloomy spirits; and is a torment to themselves, as well as to others: Always apprehending things are wrong: All ear to accusations, however false or frivolous: All eye to bad appearances; and making every little trifling circumstance a great thing. With such men there can be no fast friendship; for there is no guarding against a jealous temper sufficiently; it is impossible so to order one's behaviour that jealousy will not find sufficient matter of disturbance to itself, and to all who are about it.

it. The temper of one that is fit to be a friend, is frank and open; conſcious of no ungenerous cunning in itſelf, it does not ſuſpect it in others. *It thinketh no evil; but hopeth all things, and believeth all things* which are to the advantage of its friend. And if any circumſtance appears leſs favourable than one would deſire, yet it puts the moſt candid interpretation upon it that may be; and will not entertain a bad opinion of a friend, nor break with him, without manifeſt proof of his doing what renders him unworthy that relation.

Laſtly, there can be no faſt friendſhip where there is not a diſpoſition to bear with unavoidable infirmities, and to forgive faults: For there is no character perfect: *In many things we offend all* daily. And as we ſhall never in this life be perfectly faultleſs ourſelves; ſo we ſhall never meet with any one in whom there is not ſomething or other offenſive; and we are not to expect it. There may be infirmities and culpable defects in characters, which in general are good and worthy, and very capable of intimate and faſt friendſhip: Yet this cannot be without that generoſity which overlooks little infirmities, and can fix upon excellent and amiable qualities, (tho' blended with the others) as the objects of its eſteem and friendſhip. This ge-

SERM. XVIII. nerosity we ought by all means to cultivate in ourselves, considering how much we need it in others; and how much we expect it; and that it is in all things no more than the law of strict equity, *that as we would men should do* with us, *we should even so do* with them.

Thus I have endeavoured, in a great number of particulars, to explain to you the foundations of friendship, and the characters that are capable of it; which I could not do without at the same time taking notice of the most important rules which are to be observed in it, as the treating of the subject naturally introduced them. You will easily see that there are very few characters in human life capable of this delicate sacred relation: Such confirmed virtue, generosity, tenderness of affection, openness and frankness of spirit, such prudence and discretion, constancy and firmness of mind, sweetness and complaisance of manners, absence of all jealousy, and a disposition to overlook little faults; these qualities, I say, which have been declared necessary to perfect friendship, are rarely to be met with, combined in one character: And where they are, it must be an acquaintance of some duration, and careful observation, which can discover them, so as to rely certainly upon them. It is no wonder that a very wise man lays it down as a maxim in the conduct of life, that a man, if possible,

poſſible, ſhould have no enemies, and very few ſincere friends. It was enough for David to find one Jonathan in an age. We do dot find that ever he found another like him: And perhaps, of all places, courts are the leaſt productive of ſuch characters.

Seeing then that ſo many ſhining qualities are neceſſary to make a perfect friend, they muſt be very few who are perfectly qualified for that relation; and men ſhould be very cautious in their choice; careful not to run into intimacies all of a ſudden, intimacies fit to be uſed only in the higheſt friendſhip; not to run into them, I ſay, with perſons who are not capable of friendſhip at all. The moſt frank and generous ſpirits are the moſt in danger of this great error. They are often ſtruck with the appearance of ſome ſhining qualities, in ſtrangers to them; affect the acquaintance of ſuch perſons, and an intimacy with them; the beginnings of which, perhaps, greatly increaſe their fondneſs, and carry them farther than diſcretion allows, and which a thorough acquaintance with the admired character convinces them was much too far.

As there cannot be too great caution in chuſing an intimate friend, ſo there cannot be too great firmneſs in cleaving to him, when well choſen. A thorough friend is, undoubtedly, one of the moſt valuable enjoyments in

human

human life: It is a great pleaſure to have one
XVIII. to whom we can unboſom ourſelves with perfect ſafety; one who will tenderly enter into and ſhare all our griefs, which does indeed greatly alleviate them; one who will participate in all our joys, which gives them an additional reliſh. To have one, upon the wiſdom and faithfulneſs of whoſe counſel we can ſecurely rely, in all our perplexities; and whoſe power and intereſt, will be always at our ſervice and command. To have one, in fine, who will uſe faithful freedom in diſcloſing to us all our errors, and aſſiſt us in correcting them. Providence gives nothing in mortal life more valuable than ſuch a friend; and happy they who enjoy this bleſſing! Human nature is of a ſocial make; takes pleaſure in correſpondence with others, and is moſt unhappy in ſolitude. But our ſocial intercourſe in general gives no ſuch pleaſure, as a faithful intimate, and *confidant* of our inmoſt ſouls. Now as nature ſeems to have a great caſt for friendſhip, and to run into peculiar intimacies, (ſometimes with indiſcretion enough) and as the intimacy and affection of friends is ſomething, in its kind, diſtinct and very different from the benevolence we are to bear to all men, and from the natural affection we owe to our neareſt relations; ſo, I cannot help thinking, that the ſoul's diſpoſition to friendſhip will attend

attend it in its moſt perfect ſtate; will [illegible] it, I mean, even in heaven. Very true, there will be moſt fervent love from all, to all the bleſſed inhabitants; it is true likewiſe, that friendſhip will not indeed be of any moment there, on account of the relief we here obtain by it from our ſorrows, or the help it gives us in our diſtreſſes; but yet there may be in ſome perſons a peculiar likeneſs in temper, and employment, and taſte; there may be eminences in peculiar virtues, which lead into peculiar intimacies, that may heighten the reliſh even of heavenly delight. If ſuch a thing may be ſuppoſed, how glorious will thoſe friendſhips be, which are contracted between the perfect! How vaſtly ſuperior to any thing we can imagine upon earth! Or why may not friendſhips, upon the foundations of virtue and honour, which have been contracted in this world, be reſumed and revived in the other? And old and honourable intimacies be fixed upon ſuch a baſis, that they ſhall ſubſiſt for ever? Be that as it will, he who has got a perfect friend upon earth, cannot put too great a value upon him. This relation is to be maintained with great care; eſpecially by an inviolable fidelity, which is the very ſinew of friendſhip; for the leaſt unfaithfulneſs may ruin it for ever: There's a delicacy in it, which cannot bear the rude ſhock of falſhood

ſcience and ingenuity. To do any thing that is unfaithful under the colour and profeſſion of friendſhip, may perhaps paſs in the world with a milder cenſure than many other faults; but at the ſame time, I cannot help thinking it one of the greateſt. It may not indeed have ſo many bad conſequences as ſome other crimes; but ſurely, no crime whatſoever can betray a worſe ſpirit. A man who is capable of unfaithfulneſs in ſtrict friendſhip, one would not anſwer for him that he will not be capable, if tempted to it, of any wickedneſs. One thing is certain, that he who is capable of treachery in friendſhip, was never fit for being a friend; and the man who choſe him as ſuch, muſt have been in a great error: But whatever miſchief happens to be done by his breach of fidelity, it is much better that the deceitfulneſs of his ſpirit ſhould be known, that men may be preſerved from it for the future, which is a great deliverance.

But, to conclude the whole, let it be ever remembered, that true friendſhip, this glorious union of ſpirits, is founded in virtue; in virtue, I ſay, in that only. 'Tis this that begets a likeneſs in the moſt important diſpoſitions, ſentiments, buſineſs, and deſigns of life: 'Tis this in which the attracting and cementing power conſiſts; which we admire for it's own ſake, and love for itſelf: 'Tis this only

that

that will make friendships firm, but constant, and reputable: 'Tis this only that will make present friendship truly gainful, and the remembrance of past intimacies, pleasing. This must lye at the foundation of that, which next to virtue, is of all things the most valuable: And as virtue must lye at the foundation of friendship, so all friendship ought to be considered and improved, as a means of confirming and exalting our virtue. So it ought to be considered, I say, in our present state, in which improvement in virtue ought to be our constant aim: And the intimacies of a virtuous friendship have a noble tendency this way. We insensibly imitate the excellencies of admired characters, with which we are much and intimately conversant. We receive light and instruction from the brightest lustre of their graces: A noble emulation to equal them springs up in the mind. In virtuous commerce, good sentiments and dispositions are confirmed. In the enjoyment of such a friend, as I have been describing, a man's mind rises above the world. All the ugly rust it contracts from the other dull scenes of life is rubbed off. Every sentiment that is bad, and every impure imagination, is quelled. And, in fine, while the mind enjoys the most pleasing relaxation, it also receives the most useful im-

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